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Florence L. Jurs

VOLUNTEER LEADER IN THE EAST BAY: OAKLAND POTLUCK, A CENTRAL PLACE, AND
CHILDREN'S SERVICES, 1939-1994

Introduction by

Peggy Stinnett

Interviews Conducted by
Germaine LaBerge
in 1994

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Copy no. 1



Florence Jurs, 1994

By Peggy Stinnett
STAFF WRITER

Two legendary Oaklanders, friends who spent much of their lives in service to the community, have died within four days of each other.

Florence Jurs, a full-time volunteer all her life, and Ian Zellick, KTVU community affairs director for 32 years, were co-workers in many of the endeavors they shared helping the community's most vulnerable.

Jurs had been in failing health for several months and died Friday at her home in Montclair with family at her bedside. She was 86. Zellick died at his home a few miles away on Monday after a brief illness at age 73.

They worked closely together in the early days of Oakland Potluck, a food salvage nonprofit organization, which Jurs founded in 1986.

She was also an original board member of A Central Place 1977, where nonprofits shared downtown office space.

In 1965 she began the Oakland Public Schools Volunteer organization, which grew to a corps of 2,000 during the time the late Marcus A. Foster was superintendent of the district.

More recently Jurs served on the board of the East Bay Community Foundation and St. Paul's school, and continued her interest in Oakland Potluck.

Zellick became acquainted with numerous community organization as he directed the community affairs of KTVU and seemed to belong to all of them. At one time, he was a member of more than 26 boards of directors. A few of them were the Philharmonic Baroque Orchestra of the West, Booth Memorial Home, Displaced Homemakers, the Oakland Symphony and the Oakland Opera.

Betty Ann Bruno, former KTVU reporter and protege of Zellick, said he was remarkable in intellect. "There wasn't anything he didn't know everything about. When he was going to Egypt, he learned hieroglyphics so he could read messages in the pyramids first-hand."

Bruno was also a good friend of Jurs. "The two of them would have great discussions about all sorts of things. Indeed, they were giants in the Oakland community."

With the two of them in a room, everyone else could just sit and listen, as they explored some subject and took opposing sides of an argument.

Kimi Matsumoto, a longtime friend of Jurs, said. "She had a tremendous curiosity and seemed to be interested in everyone and what they thought about things. She was also so persuasive she could talk anyone into doing whatever project she was working on at the time."

Jurs was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming, but grew up in Des Moines, Iowa, where her father, James LeCron, was editor of the Des Moines Register newspaper and her mother was Helen Cowles LeCron, a member of the Cowles Publishing family.

Zellick was born in San Francisco and grew up there, graduating from San Francisco State University and earning a masters from Mills College. He was a Marine in World War II and saw action in the South Pacific.

His wife, Beverly Zellick, better known as Bevo, said of the two close friends dying within days of each other, "They seemed to be racing each other to the Pearly Gates. I suppose they thought they had done all they could do here with all their good works behind them, and should move on. I'm sure they're laughing together where they are the way they always did here."

Private memorial services will be held by the families. The Jurs family requests that friends remember her with contributions to St. Paul's School, East Bay Community Foundation or Oakland Potluck. The Zellick family requests memorials go to East Bay Agency for Children.

CORRECTION

Because of an editing error, the names of surviving family members of both Florence Jurs and Ian Zellick, unrelated Oakland community leaders who died four days apart, were omitted from a news obituary in Saturday's newspaper.

Eugene Jurs, husband of Florence Jurs for 63 years, survives her, as do their four children, Karen, Christina, Cynthia and Emily Jurs, who lives in Oakland, and six grandchildren.

Cataloging Information

JURS, Florence LeCron (b. 1912)

Oakland volunteer leader

Volunteer Leader in the East Bay: Oakland Potluck, A Central Place, and Children's Services, 1939-1994, 1996, v, 179 pp.

Newspaper family (Cowles) background and childhood in Des Moines; education in Switzerland, France, and Stanford University, 1932-1935; Eugene Jurs and career at Shand and Jurs; founding Oakland School Volunteers and Resource Program, 1960s; developing A Central Place, 1977-1994; beginning Oakland Potluck, 1986-1994; working at The Management Center, 1982-1985; thoughts on volunteerism, Oakland politics, Marcus Foster and children's services; recollections of Henry Wallace and FDR administration; serving on boards of Lincoln Child Center, East Bay Activity Center, Volunteer Bureau of Alameda County.

Introduction by Peggy Stinnett, editor of the editorial pages, The Oakland Tribune.

Interviewed 1994 by Germaine LaBerge. Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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INTRODUCTION--by Peggy Stinnett

Life is a journey for all of us. But for Florence Jurs, life has been an exhilarating climb up a tall mountain.

Unlike many of us, she never has run out of breath even as she reached new heights.

She has stopped along the way long enough to smell the flowers once in a while. But usually it has been to start a worthwhile organization, or to help one that is in trouble. Then she takes off looking for something new to intrigue her.

In the wake she has left over the years, there are strong community-based organizations that would not exist today had it not been for her guidance and leadership. All have enduring value to the community. When her friends hear that Florence has a new project they smile, knowing they will have a telephone call from her soon asking them to get involved.

"You don't say no when Florence calls," a friend of hers told me. And I know from personal experience that is how it is.

One of her early projects I personally became involved in, was the Children's Hospital of the East Bay, as it was then called. Florence was deeply involved in a development program there that served children with emotional problems. Because of her, I became involved in the hospital's volunteer work.

Later when I began working as a journalist for the Montclairion newspaper, she urged the publisher to have me cover the school board and city council. I did, and my career took off.

Another of her early interests helped establish a volunteer program in the Oakland Public Schools. Her typical energy was the driving force behind the program that ultimately drew more than 2,000 volunteers who worked performing various valuable functions for kids.

Several years later, my concern about Oakland schools led me to run for the school board. Of course, Florence was co-chair of my campaign. I was elected and served ten years before returning to journalism.

Florence has been deeply involved in many projects over the years, especially in non-profit organizations that needed help with operations and fund-raising. In several cases, she helped to establish them. Such was the case with an organization called A Central Place that still thrives in downtown Oakland.

At the time in the 1970s all but a few of the many small non-profit organizations in Oakland were working out of some woman's kitchen, using

home phones as the lifeline to other volunteers. How wonderful it would be if there could be "a central place" where they could all share space, preferably in a downtown office building, the volunteers would say. Florence Jurs got together with some key people from non-profits, and the small group approached an office building owner who had some unused office space. A deal was struck and A Central Place was born. Today it is a model of how non-profits can share space, and has been copied throughout the country.

But perhaps the most satisfying to Florence of all her organizations is Oakland Potluck, which was founded after she and her husband Gene celebrated their 50th anniversary at the Lakeview Club.

After the guests had left, Florence looked at the considerable leftover beautiful food and asked the club what would happen to it. She could take it home with her, they said; otherwise it would be thrown out.

The idea that good food would be thrown away when people were out on the street hungry and cold upset Florence.

Out of her concern, she founded Oakland Potluck, which has grown until now it feeds some 600,000 meals a year. She has stepped aside now that it is going strong on its own.

Over the forty years I have known Florence, I have noticed she is astute in choosing people for the talents they can bring to a project, or an issue. She is intensely interested in everyone and what they think, not in their financial worth or social status. She likes to hear how and why they think the way they do.

In her personal life, she brings people together who might not otherwise meet, and who may not agree on issues. That is what makes her dinner parties memorable. It is not unusual to sit for hours at the table as people debate, or even argue vehemently, over issues.

Florence Jurs has had so many achievements in her lifetime, it would be easy to overlook the most important one.

Although she could almost claim sainthood for the good things she has done, she remains very much a down-to-earth warm human being who loves good fun. She's self-effacing and always is more interested in others than in herself.

Florence is an inspiration and dear friend to many, but especially to women, just by how she lives her life. Doing what is quintessentially Florence Jurs, she has become a legend in her time.

Peggy Stinnett
Editor of the Editorial Pages
The Oakland Tribune

May 1995
Oakland, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY--Florence Jurs

A well-known citizen of Oakland, Florence Jurs has sought out ways to improve the city she has called home for sixty-some years. She was a founding member of Oakland Public School Volunteers in the fifties. In the seventies, she founded A Central Place, where over twenty-five nonprofit groups share low-rent office space in downtown Oakland. More recently, Florence Jurs established and coordinated Oakland Potluck, a volunteer group which links donors of food with church and community groups feeding the hungry. The Regional Oral History Office had long been anxious to document the life of Florence Jurs; her contribution to the city of Oakland through her civic activities would make an oral history with her a valuable addition to our series on volunteer leaders.

In early 1993, I phoned Mrs. Jurs to inquire about the possibility of recording her memoir. She responded enthusiastically; we agreed to start as soon as I could find funding. The Lucile and David Packard Foundation provided the start-up funds to begin tape recording in 1994; the Packard Foundation and the East Bay Community Foundation then made it possible to finish the project in 1996. Many thanks to both foundations for making this oral history become a reality.

In March 1994, Florence Jurs and I met at her home on Estates Drive in Oakland, the home she and her husband, Eugene Jurs, built more than fifty years ago. It was a get-acquainted afternoon. There were many topics to be covered. As a young girl growing up in Des Moines, Iowa, she was exposed to stimulating conversations and experiences as a member of the Cowles publishing family (publishers of *The Des Moines Register* and *Tribune*, *Minneapolis Star Journal*, and *Look* magazine). Sunday dinners at her grandparents' home included visiting politicians like Herbert Hoover, Henry Wallace, and Wendell Willkie.

Besides her upbringing in Des Moines, there was schooling in Switzerland and France before matriculating at Stanford University. There she met Gene and decided California was to be her lifelong home; Gene's family company, Shand and Jurs, was located in west Berkeley where they manufactured safety equipment for oil tanks and tankers. Mrs. Jurs discusses her husband's work and his involvement later with UC political science professor Joseph Harris "who had invented the Harris Votomatic machine on which we now all vote. It was the first electronic voting machine. Gene became the managing vice president in charge of production."

In addition to her early life, there was her involvement in Oakland Public Schools, city of Oakland politics, Lincoln Child Center, the Marcus Foster Institute, the Management Center, A Central Place, St. Paul's School, among other groups with which she was actively involved. All this Florence Jurs did while raising four daughters, Karen, Emily, Christina, and Cynthia.

Six interview sessions were recorded in the Jurs's comfortable living room on May 5, May 18, May 27, June 16, June 27, and September 9, 1994. Mrs. Jurs always met me at the door in an upbeat mood, stunningly dressed, gracious. She spoke with candor and a sense of humor, remembering details and events easily. The twelve tapes were transcribed in our office, edited lightly, and sent to Mrs. Jurs for approval. She took great care with her editing, possibly the influence of her newspaper family background! She added two or three paragraphs and those are noted in brackets. After final corrections, the transcript was indexed at ROHO and bound for placement in libraries. Researchers interested in the city of Oakland's history, urban race relations, volunteerism, board management, and local and national politics will find rich material in these interviews.

Peggy Stinnett, editor of the Oakland Tribune editorial pages, wrote the introduction to this volume. Bob Blackburn, presently at California State University-Hayward and formerly with the Oakland Public Schools, contributed his remarks from A Central Place luncheon honoring Florence Jurs. Thanks to both Ms. Stinnett and Mr. Blackburn for these fine additions to the volume.

Networking and hard work have been hallmarks of Florence Jurs's life. She involves herself in projects with a passion and inspires the same in others, a reason every group of which she was a member flourished. She is a get-things-done person and procrastination is not a word in her vocabulary. The only salaried job she held was late in life with the Management Center. The city of Oakland has been blessed with thousands of hours of her volunteer time and expertise.

Among many awards are the Otto Hieb Award of the East Bay Community Foundation, the Soroptomist Award for Women Helping Women, J.C. Penney's Golden Rule Award, and Award for Public Service given by Delta Sigma Phi sorority. In addition, the California legislature named Florence Jurs "Woman of the Year" in 1989; the Oakland City Council declared August 31, 1986, Eugene and Florence Jurs Day for outstanding service to the city of Oakland.

At age 84, Florence Jurs is still involved in her city, still reaching out to new friends, still interested in developing creative solutions to problems. Florence loves cross-fertilization of ages and ideas; her six grandchildren, though scattered across the country, are in close communication with her.

It has been an honor and a joy for me to spend "quality time" with Florence Jurs. As many others have found, her inspiration and energy are contagious.

Germaine LaBerge
Project Director

July 8, 1996
University of California, Berkeley

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Florence Le Cron Gurs
 Date of birth Sept 28, 1912 Birthplace Cheyenne, Wyoming
 Father's full name James DeFrees Le Cron
 Occupation Newspaper Editor Birthplace Waynesboro, Penna
 Mother's full name Helen Cowles Le Cron
 Occupation Writer Birthplace Algona, Iowa
 Your spouse Eugene Ellison Gurs
 Occupation Retired Man Birthplace Denver, Colorado
 Your children Karen, Kalkstein, Emily Sparks,
Christine Papadakis, Cynthia Gurs
 Where did you grow up? Des Moines, Iowa
 Present community Oakland, Calif
 Education Stanford graduate 1935
 Occupation(s) — Housewife, almost full time
volunteer
 Areas of expertise Non profit agencies Board Development,
Children's services, Mental Health Services,
Food for hungry people
 Other interests or activities Education, art

Organizations in which you are active I have served on numerous
Boards of Directors + am still active in East Bay
Agency for Children, Mental Health assoc, was
founder of Oakland Potluck a group salvaging food
for the hungry. Hills Associate Council, P,

I CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

[Interview 1: May 5, 1994]##¹

The LeCrons and the Cowles

LaBerge: We usually like to start with your childhood and your background. So, why don't you tell me where you were born and your family situation?

Jurs: I was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming, and only lived there till I was six months old. My parents had both graduated from Northwestern [University] and my father got a job; I think, a slightly lesser one at first but then he became an assistant to the governor of Wyoming. And he liked that. Maybe he was more like a secretary; I don't know exactly; but he loved it. And he loved Wyoming. I was born in 1912 in Cheyenne. It was still Wild West, I'm told. His father came from Pennsylvania and his mother from Indiana. My mother's family came from Iowa. My mother did not much like Wyoming so when her father offered his son-in-law a job on the newspaper in Des Moines they went there. Just before he died, my father happened to say to me--he had never said this before--he said, "Maybe I should have stayed in Wyoming." And I said, "Why did you leave?" He had really loved it there. He loved the outdoors and he loved the life there. But he said my mother was not very happy. She had felt uprooted, I think, from her roots in Iowa and the Middle West.

She came from a big family and Iowa was her stamping ground and she missed it all. She was a writer. She always had a job and from the time I was three, she had a secretary daily and worked out of her home. She was proud of the fact that she had

¹ This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

paid for her obstetrical bill (and which then, you know, was probably only fifty dollars or so) by the sale of a poem and she was always proud of the fact that she had contributed and always did from then on.

So they came to Des Moines where he had a job with my grandfather (on the thriving paper, the Des Moines Register & Tribune, owned with a partner, by my grandfather). He stayed there until, during the [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt era he became an assistant to Henry Wallace who had become the secretary of agriculture. The Wallaces had lived right next door to the Cowles family in Des Moines.

LaBerge: Tell me your grandparents' names.

Jurs: Gardner Cowles was president of the Des Moines Register & Tribune. They had a lot of other newspapers and radio stations as time went on and eventually Look magazine and a lot of others including, later, the Minneapolis Star Journal and Tribune. Originally, it was just the Des Moines Register & Tribune.

LaBerge: And your grandmother's name was?

Jurs: Florence Call Cowles.

LaBerge: Okay, so is that where you got your name?

Jurs: Yes, I was named for her. My mother's name was Helen and they told me one time that my father wanted to call me Eleanor because Helen and Eleanor would be the same names and that would mean naming me for my mother. But she wanted to name me Florence. When I was born, the doctors, or somebody, said, when they filled out the birth certificate, "What are you going to call the baby?" And my father said, "Florence." That was the first my mother knew that he had agreed. She liked the name but not for me. She always called me Bunny; it's a horrible name. My father never liked that name so he always called me Florence but my mother and all her relatives called me Bunny. When the LeCrons, my father's family, came to visit they always called me Florence.

Eventually when I got to Stanford [University], I thought, oh, this is an opportunity to be Florence instead of Bunny. I was tall and I thought of a Bunny as being the cuddly little southern type with a southern accent. I didn't think it fitted me. But I knew three students from Des Moines who hailed me at the Stanford post office one day, when there were a lot of people standing around, and they shouted from a car something about Bunny and then all the people I was with said, "Oh, what a cute, cute nickname." So, they began calling me Bunny. I just thought



Four generations, 1913: Nancy Call, Florence Le Cron, Helen Le Cron, Florence Cowles.

it was a lost cause.

LaBerge: But does anyone call you Bunny now?

Jurs: Only, now, a few from the past. A friend from St. Louis who has lately visited us most of the week, does. And my sister does. And Des Moines people do and Stanford people do, too. Gene, my husband, called me Bunny at first. But he began calling me Rab which is what he still calls me.

LaBerge: For rabbit? [Laughter]

Jurs: --which I like all right. But I eventually thought, well, I kept meeting new people and getting on committees and one thing and another and I thought, "Why, I can just tell them my name is Florence and they will call me that." Now nobody calls me Bunny unless they come from Des Moines or from Stanford days or are related to me on the Cowles side.

LaBerge: What was your father's name?

Jurs: James DeFries LeCron. His father came from near Gettysburg in Pennsylvania near the border of Maryland and Pennsylvania.

LaBerge: What was his father's name?

Jurs: His father was Simon LeCron. His family were French Huguenots who left France early on and got to Pennsylvania and some of them became like Pennsylvania Dutch people. The name was sometimes spelled LEKRON or LEKRONE. You know, people didn't always spell names alike. My father's mother was Mary Frazer LeCron. Her father was from Indiana and he was a judge in the town of Warsaw. Between the War of 1812 and the Civil War, England and the United States were having disagreements and Abraham Lincoln assigned him to a commission to help straighten out these problems. He went with his four or five children and his wife to Washington [D.C.] for a couple of years. I think that my grandfather's sister went to a girls' school there where a good friend was a daughter of the LeCrons. I think that was how the LeCrons and Frazers became acquainted.

LaBerge: Oh, I see.

Jurs: I did not know my great-grandfather Frazer, because he died before I was born, but I did know his wife, who lived to be ninety-four, my great-grandmother. I know that he was tall. My father was six-feet-four and a half, which was very tall for his era. That was supposed to be the same height as Abraham Lincoln. And my great-grandfather was tall, too. In my childhood, my

father had to have shirts made. His arms were long. Earlier, when he had little money, he just had to wear sleeves that were too short. And beds weren't quite long enough either. That was really like being six-feet-eight or nine today.

He told me once that it had been expected he would go into his grandfather's law office after he graduated from college. But when it came right down to it and he started to study law--he told me shortly before he died--that he discovered that the law had little to do with justice. It had to do with the past and with historical decisions and with precedents. It didn't always have to do with what was right and just. He decided not to study law after all.

Sunday Dinners at Grandparents': Politics and Newspapers in Iowa

Jurs: He really liked politics and he liked the political process and he was very much a liberal and very interested in issues. The Cowles family was Republican. My grandfather was a friend of [President] Herbert Hoover, for instance. My father was by far the most liberal of the family but they all liked him a lot. He was a very likeable person and seemed able to disagree but let everybody know how he felt. They respected him. At the time that Roosevelt came into office, my father was for him all the way. Of course, the papers were beginning to be more liberal by then and by Roosevelt's second term, they did come out in favor of Roosevelt.

LaBerge: Okay, so they endorsed him.

Jurs: By the time he ran for the fourth term, they did not. There were big family dinners on Sunday at my grandparents' house. We went there almost every Sunday for a one o'clock dinner, and there would be usually a good many people there. My grandparents had six children, some of whom lived around there, and a lot of grandchildren. There were also often visitors. I remember when I was quite young, Wendell Willkie came to town. You know, political visitors came to check in with a newspaper which was very important in the Middle West. It was before TV and in the early days of radio--newspapers were terribly important to politicians.

LaBerge: Being the newspaper person in the town really was one of the most important--

Jurs: The paper was important in Iowa. It covered all of Iowa. Des

Moines is the capital and though it was not a large city, politicians came through. The Register & Tribune owned other smaller newspapers and radio stations. It was, in fact, something of a monopoly in Iowa.

Sunday dinners at the Cowles' house were always interesting. I was the oldest of the grandchildren and as I said, my mother was the oldest of six children. So, they had a big table in the dining room with everybody there, but they always had a children's table in the breakfast room which was as big as most people's dining rooms. There was always lots of food and they had a lot of help. It was an expansive kind of a life and very comfortable.

I remember when I got to be about twelve, my grandmother decided I should move to the adult table. It was interesting but it was difficult to be the only child at the table and I wished that I was back with the other kids.

LaBerge: So did you meet Wendell Willkie?

Jurs: Oh, sure.

LaBerge: And do you remember that?

Jurs: Yes, but that--. We weren't for him and it was just a name I happened to think of. But a lot of people came through. And oh, yes. There were all these discussions. Newspaper people are curious about everything. So there were all kinds of discussions which were very interesting with people disagreeing, my father often disagreeing with some of the others.

Access to Education

LaBerge: Oh, my goodness. Well, going back to your parents both going to Northwestern. I mean, that in itself was unusual in that--

Jurs: No, in their era--everybody who could, went to college. I know my grandfather said over and over, he was very proud of Iowa. He said--and I think this is still true--that there were more small colleges and more people going to college in Iowa than in any state in the union. Des Moines had Drake University. Grinnell [College] was not far away. And the University of Iowa, Coe College. A lot of small ones that are still extant. But so, 'most everybody went. Of course, my father didn't grow up in Iowa but all his family went to college. Northwestern wasn't

very far away, in Indiana. Even my grandmother Cowles went to Northwestern in an era when women did not always go to college.

LaBerge: Oh, really?

Jurs: And I don't remember when she was born. I do know my grandfather LeCron, who was about the same age, grew up near Gettysburg. One time he told me that after the Gettysburg battle, the family drove over to look at the battlefield. I think he said he was twelve. That would have been, what, 1864 or something like that. I think my grandmother on the Cowles side was about that same age.

Everybody wrote in that family. You know, that's the way newspaper people are. My grandmother Cowles wrote a number of books. One was about Iowa in the early days. She could remember Iowa when buffaloes roamed on the prairies. She remembered that, and she remembered friendly Indians coming and saying, "It's cold. May I lie in front of your fire for a while?" That book is about the founding of Algona, Iowa where she grew up.

Her father, whose name was Ambrose Call, with his brother, Asa, founded the little town of Algona, and thinking that it was on a river they believed it was going to be what Chicago turned out to be. The railroad was to be built soon across Iowa but Algona never turned into a big town. That's where the Calls lived. My grandfather Cowles had come to Algona to teach school. He later was school superintendent until, with a friend, he bought the Des Moines paper.

The Calls were a big part of the early days in Iowa. I have the book my grandmother wrote. I said to my husband a few days ago, "I don't think you've ever read Grandmother Cowles' book. It's all about Indians--friendly and not so friendly--and about the very early days." I think they reached Algona in the 1850s. And my grandmother Call, whose name was Nancy Henderson Call, came with her family when she was about twelve in covered wagons from Virginia because Iowa had such fertile land and so much opportunity for people.

My great-grandfather, Ambrose Call, and his brother, came through on their way to California at the time of the gold rush. I guess it was about 1850. They were on horseback. My great-grandmother was twelve and she was sitting on the tongue of the covered wagon. My mother always said she had reddish hair and she was very pretty. I didn't know her until she was in her eighties and was very old and wearing a little cap. She looked like somebody who was very, very old-fashioned. My grandfather had died a long time before.

He and his brother had camped with this troop of people on their way to Algona. Ambrose said, "That's the girl I'm going to marry." He went on to the gold fields but they didn't make the big fortune that they thought they were going to. He came back to Iowa. He knew where these Calls and the others were going to be. And he came back and married my great-grandmother. She was fifteen when they were married. She had her first daughter, first child, Florence Call Cowles, my grandmother, when she was sixteen.

LaBerge: Goodness. My goodness.

Jurs: My grandfather Cowles got to Algona. His father was a Methodist minister who went from church to church, spending a couple of years at one church and then later at another. My grandfather went to four different colleges (there being so many in Iowa) that whatever the local college was, he went to that college to get his education. He belonged, incidentally, to three separate fraternities. He was a Sigma Alpha Epsilon and a Phi Delta, and still one more because there were different fraternities at each of the colleges.

They lived in a lot of different places. My grandfather came to Algona later to be principal of the school or a superintendent of schools. He met my grandmother Florence who was a teacher. And they, then, settled in Algona. Later he became a banker. He and his friend, Harvey Ingham, decided to buy the Des Moines paper when it came up for sale. Harvey Ingham was the editor and my grandfather was the business head. He had a marvelous head for business. He made a good deal of money because he was a very canny business man.

Artist Russell Cowles and the Family Newspaper Business

LaBerge: Is he the one who's the Methodist minister?

Jurs: His father was the minister. So then my grandparents were married and had six children, my mother being the oldest. I think they moved to Des Moines when my mother was in high school. My mother went automatically to Northwestern because that's where her mother had gone. Her mother had first gone to the Chicago Art Institute. Or maybe it was after she graduated from Northwestern. I don't know which came first. But she thought she was going to be an artist and she did paint. She had a son who came after my mother and who became quite a well-known artist, Russell Cowles. He, in fact, has a painting in the

Metropolitan [Museum of Art, New York] and he had several in the Museum of Modern Art and in the Brooklyn Museum.

LaBerge: Oh, really?

Jurs: So yes, he was a painter's painter. He had many admirers but he wasn't one of those who's very well known. Among painters he was.

He had told my grandfather that he wanted to be an artist. My grandfather, his father, couldn't understand how anybody could not want to work at the paper. And he wasn't sympathetic but he was very fair. After Russell graduated from Dartmouth he wanted to go to the Chicago Art Institute. His father asked him to work for the newspaper for a year and if at the end of the year he still wanted to study art, he said that he would pay for Russell's training there.

At the end of the year, my mother said her brother Russell said, "All right, Father, now I did what I said I'd do and I'm ready to go to the art institute." His father was very disappointed but he stood by what he had said he would do. He was the kind who, once people succeed at something, it doesn't really matter what it was, then he could admire them. When, after his son got the Prix de Rome, which was respected, and then later when Russell began to be known and was selling his paintings, his father commissioned him to do his portrait and also one of Harvey Ingham.

And then there were two more girls and two more boys. The two men, John Cowles and Gardner Cowles, Jr. (called Mike) were also very good businessmen. They both went to prep school at Exeter and then to Harvard. They were a couple of years apart in age and were the ones that bought Look and several other magazines and a number of radio stations.

LaBerge: Does the family still have those?

Jurs: Well, Look went out of business. The Saturday Evening Post failed and then Look later went out of business. Radio and TV came into the picture. So, no they don't. One of my cousins works on and runs the Minneapolis Star. The Des Moines paper has been sold. It's not the empire that it once was. But yes, a lot of relatives are still working in it.

When I got to Stanford, even, I sort of assumed that I'd almost have to go into the newspaper business so I went out for the [Stanford] Daily. But I found I didn't like it at all. Then I also tried the weekly humorous magazine. I'm not very



Florence and Mary Le Cron, circa 1916.

interested in humor! I only did that for a month or two. Then I moved into other circles because it really wasn't right for me. My mother was a writer, you see, all of my life and my father was interested in that, too.

LaBerge: What was your mother's name? I'm not sure if we have it.

Jurs: Helen Cowles LeCron.

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Father, James LeCron: Government Work and Photography

LaBerge: Tell me more about your father.

Jurs: My father came to work for the paper when I, their first child, was six months old. He had worked for Governor Carey (Robert Davis Carey). The University of Wyoming wanted the records after my father was in Washington with the New Deal for ten years or so. After he died, they asked if they could have any papers. So my sister and I gave all his papers to the University of Wyoming, although my father really hadn't had any further connection with Wyoming and the university there. But my father took a lot of photographs. He was an ardent amateur photographer and was really very good. In Venice, for instance, and also in Rome in my youth, there were salons where people, amateurs and other professionals, could enter their photographs. Many of his pictures were hung in these salons.

We went to Europe when I was in my teens and he took seven cameras along! My sister and I were so mad because we had to carry his tripod and some of his cameras. He took a Leica loaded with black and white. And also a Leica loaded with color film so he'd have both of them at the ready. He did stereoscopic pictures, too, as well as movies.

II SOJOURN IN EUROPE, 1930-1932

Studying in French at Home and Abroad

Jurs: My father and mother decided when I graduated from high school that they would like to go to Europe for a year. So, they took a leave of absence from their jobs and they took their car. People just didn't do that very much at all then. Now, of course, they'd buy a car over there and then sell it when they left. But they took their car and us and they were going to go to Europe with us for a year and put us in a Swiss school. Mickie, my sister, hadn't graduated yet from high school. She was one year behind me. We're sixteen months apart in age and I had just graduated.

LaBerge: Was this about 1930?

Jurs: Yes, I graduated from high school in 1930.

LaBerge: Okay.

Jurs: And so they were going to go for a year and look around for schools. We didn't want to go to a big school. Some people in that era put their daughters in Swiss schools that were finishing schools and were too fancy for our family. We visited a number of schools and found a nice little school with only thirty students. It was called Les Hêtres and was in the hills above Lausanne. Mickie and I started there but we only went one semester.

I should backtrack to explain that a couple of years before that, my parents had hired a very good French teacher in Des Moines, Mademoiselle Baridon, with this idea in their minds of spending some time in France. For quite a few years, she came every Monday night for dinner and while we had dinner, we'd talk in French about the weather or the politics or the news and then

we'd settle down after dinner and take dictée (dictation) and study grammar and read in French. We also had homework to do during the week.

LaBerge: The whole family?

Jurs: The whole family. Our mother didn't like it very much, and she sat in on it but she got so she didn't do her homework and she really did not work very hard. But my father threw himself into it and Mickie and I did, too. We could already speak moderately good French but the accent is a little different in Switzerland and it took a few days to catch on and to feel confident.

And our roommates--. Oh, one of the pluses for this school was that there were no other Americans there. The theory was nobody would be speaking English, but there was a Czechoslovakian girl and there were several Dutch girls who spoke English. Mickie and I each had a Dutch roommate. There was, I guess, one British girl. Well, anyway, I know there was quite a mix but the Dutch girls all spoke good English and they preferred, the girls preferred, speaking English. So they talked English to Mickie and me. All the lessons were conducted in French, of course. And we went skiing in French. We did everything in French.

We only stayed one semester because we thought we weren't learning enough and at Christmas we persuaded our parents that it would be better to leave--we liked the school but we both thought another place would be better. We four, during our Christmas break in Pontresina, debated what to do. We ended up at the University of Grenoble in France.

LaBerge: It sounds like you had quite a bit of input in how you were raised.

Jurs: Oh, we did.

LaBerge: And that's not the case for everybody.

Parents' Creativity

Jurs: No, I suppose we did. [However, although our parents both had many interests, Mickie and I really did not participate in them. My father had many hobbies, all interesting and some unusual. He gardened with great pleasure and loved planning his flower borders. He forced bulbs in the winter, which in Iowa was, of course, cold and snowy. Their dining room was really a solarium

with plants, many of them flowering, on benches all around the room beneath arched windows looking toward the garden. There was a tiled floor and lattice on the walls so that he could, if he wanted to, have growing vines. They had planned for a fountain at one end. It was, I think, a very pretty room and quite distinctive.]¹

At one point, he wanted to make plastic casts of heads of people. He wanted to start with me. I was ten or twelve. My mother wouldn't permit it. So, he cast my hand. Plaster gets very hot as it hardens.

Finally, he talked the woman across the street--I thought she was terribly old; she was probably sixty--he talked her into it, and she was willing to be his first subject. He knew how to do it but he had ordinary drinking straws in her nose so that she could breathe, and one of them broke. It was pretty scary for a little while. We were all watching. He had to quickly get the plaster away from her nose. Later, a doctor friend down the street gave him some tubes that he could use in the subjects' noses. So, they had a head of Russell Cowles for a while looking like a Roman senator and Dr. Fay on the other side of the mantel--.

Once, at the ranch in Calaveras County, he decided to experiment with cattails. He thought if he split cattails down the middle--they're furry inside but you know, soft and like a little pelt, like a little hamster pelt. So, he experimented and experimented with them. That was after he retired in California. And he made the dearest little rug, like a bedside rug, all made of little cattail pelts turned inside out.

But he didn't have us help with things like that. He had a garden that he had loved and adored but he did not include us in the planting. Mickie and I both, with our children, when they were very little gave them things like a package of radish seeds so that they could raise their own radishes. Oh, Gene, who had a good workshop in the basement took our oldest daughter, when she was really little, down and gave her a little hammer and showed her how to hammer nails. My father never did that. We watched all of these things that he did but weren't invited to participate. I think that was really strange. Mickie and I ponder about that quite a lot. But he was really a very creative man.

LaBerge: Oh, he sounds like it.

¹ This material was added by Mrs. Jurs during the editing process.

Jurs: And fun, too. He had a funny sense of humor. Also, he loved poetry, he and my mother both did. Sometimes she did the dishes. Later they usually had a maid. She preferred working so she could pay a maid rather than doing the housework. When she had to do the dishes, Dad would read poetry to her. He read very well. And they also, when they'd go on a trip together, they'd pick a subject like daffodils, we'll say, and then see what poems they could think of about daffodils--what poetry, what line of poetry they could come up with, first his turn and then hers and then his again. And then they'd choose rain or another subject, some common subject. That was the way they were.

LaBerge: Well, it just sounds like a fascinating upbringing.

Jurs: Well, they were not like other people, really. But it wasn't all easy, partly because Mickie and I weren't really included in what he did at Christmas time, for instance. Mickie and I both turned out very differently from him in that way. Both of us encouraged our children to participate in whatever we did for Christmas, everything. My father decorated the tree as if Santa Claus brought it. (I guess lots of people did that then.) And we didn't see it until Christmas morning.

But one time he went to Chicago ahead of Christmas and at Marshall Fields Store in a display window he saw a polar bear, pretty big, made out of wood and covered with cotton batting. My dad didn't tell us this, but he came home and decided to make a bear to go under our tree for a surprise. It didn't look very much like a bear in the end but it did look like a short-legged white furry creature. So, he called it a Ramagoozlin. And he made up a big story about it and put it under the tree after we were in bed.

After that, for eight or ten years, he made a different creature every year. One of them was called a Whiffenpoof and it had a long tail that wrapped around the tall Christmas tree. The animal had a tube running through it. Dad smoked and so he would blow smoke from behind the tree into the tube and smoke would come out of the animal's mouth. People came from all over town to see these creatures. And the newspaper people thought it was always very funny so they always had a photographer come and take pictures of the current animal. Mickie and I never were permitted really to participate, you see, but it was interesting because we never knew what was going to happen next.



Mary and Florence Le Cron, 1930

University of Grenoble and Life with a French Family, 1931

LaBerge: But in contrast, for instance, when you decided that you thought you needed to leave the school at Lausanne, that you could say it to your parents, "We don't think this is the right place," and they'd listen to you.

Jurs: Oh, yes, they did. They wanted us to learn French and if we weren't learning enough, they agreed that we should leave. I should point out that the teaching was fine; it was just that too many of the students were eager to speak English. (The words Les Hêtres, by the way, mean The Birches, in case you don't speak French.)

While we were still at Les Hêtres the parents of our first cousins, Gardner and Betsy Quarton, decided to put their children in two Swiss schools not far away from our school. Our cousins, a boy and a girl, were twins and were about six years younger than Mickie; their father was a lawyer in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and was married to my mother's sister. We could see them from time to time during that semester. Our two families were together at the ski resort, Pontresina, for the Christmas holidays.

Yes, we could say what we wanted. It was decided that we would go to Grenoble to the university there. We found two families with whom Mickie and I could board while we attended classes. My family was a professor's family, professor of semantics, a very nice man, and he and his wife had four children around my age. Mickie lived in another family, very, very different. A Catholic family, of decaying elegance, a branch of the Perrin family, a big glove company. It was very different from my family because the girls in that family had to be chaperoned wherever they went, even to tea-dances. My "family" was considered liberal and was more intellectual. Their daughter was a law student.

[Interruption]

LaBerge: You were telling me about the professor's family you lived with. Once before, you told me about getting scarlet fever. But I'd like to hear about other things, too, in that family.

Jurs: It was a very interesting family. They were very likeable. They had taken in many boarders, one at a time, because they only had one extra bedroom. I don't know whether they called them all their American daughters but they certainly did call me that. I

was there most of two years, you see. And I was very fond especially of him, but also of her.

The four children--their daughter was twenty-one and was studying law. She was engaged to another law student. It was a rather intellectual family. The next child was at the University of Lyons and he came for vacations. He was planning to be an archeology professor. The third child was about fifteen. Oh, they were so French! The boys wore little short pants. His voice had changed; he might have been sixteen years old. But he was wearing little short pants and was treated like a little boy. And then there was little Jacques, "Zo Zo" Metzger, was what he was called. He was ten years old and very sweet. It was a good family.

Scarlet Fever

Jurs: My sister and I had to take the street car each day back and forth from the university up a kind of a hill to La Tronche (a suburb), rather like coming to Montclair from Oakland. La Tronche was the area that they lived in, both families. I think I had probably caught scarlet fever on the crowded tram. At dinner, I had at first been feeling fine although I had a slight cold. I suddenly felt this hellish sore throat. It was strep throat and it turned out that I had scarlet fever.

Our mother and father were in Paris and Mickie had written to them earlier about a skiing trip. Mickie's family was the old-style Catholic family, and the girls were well chaperoned. But when they went skiing, they could go with boys and other girls and those rules were relaxed.

Mickie had written to our parents telling about how somebody almost fell off a cliff and about exciting skiing. Our father wrote and said, "Don't tell those stories. Your mother isn't feeling well and she gets nervous and excited. Please don't write us stories like that."

So, anyway, I was telling the Metzgers, my French family, about her and suddenly I began to cry. I suddenly realized I had a dreadfully sore throat. And I cried and I said I had a terribly, terribly sore throat! When I sat down to dinner, I had not even realized that I had such a sore throat. They called the doctor, made me go to bed. He said I had scarlet fever and that I would have to be quarantined for six weeks. I was very sick. I remember, at one point, being delirious. I've never been

delirious any other time in my life. I sort of knew I was talking nonsense in French. Not really nonsense, I was telling some long story, but it wasn't all connected. It sounded nutty. I half knew that.

Mickie came and talked to me through the window. I think they had called her. She couldn't come in the house because of the quarantine. So, we talked through the window and Mickie and I said that I would go to the hospital. Madame Metzger said, "No, no, you can't go to the hospital. You're our American daughter and we don't want you to go to the hospital. We'll take care of you." I asked about contagion. She said, well, Marie Louise, the one studying law, was twenty-one and already had had scarlet fever and so had Madame. They would look after me.

It was a strange kind of quarantine. My room was downstairs, right by the front door. And the other family members could come in, go past my room, upstairs to their upstairs sitting room or into the dining room on the first floor but not come near me. They had a little maid and they wouldn't let the maid come in to my room. Madame brought me trays and Marie Louise did if she was home from school. I was very sick.

LaBerge: Did your parents know about this?

Jurs: No, I kept saying to Mickie in the beginning, through the window, "Don't write them. I'll get over this." Our mother would be very upset about it. She would get all excited and I said, "We'll tell her about it later." Well, I didn't know I was going to be so sick.

Then after a couple of weeks, little Georges came down with scarlet fever. Oh, I felt terrible. I couldn't help but think it was all my fault. It was less than two weeks, I guess. And then, pretty soon Monsieur also came down with scarlet fever.

Monsieur had thought that his wife had too much to do with two scarlet fever patients. I was getting somewhat better by that time. But I had to have trays and help and I was very weak. He said he was going to bring the trays to me. They had an elaborate arrangement so whoever came in, like Marie Louise or her mother or, later, Monsieur, had to wash his hands in something like Lysol before they went into the rest of the house. There was a big placard on the front door saying in big letters SCARLET FEVER--a half-hearted quarantine.

We had to tell our parents. They came from Paris post-haste. Monsieur died. I think maybe Mickie phoned them and they came. So, they came post-haste in their Ford but they couldn't

come in to see me. I was better but weak as a kitten and I said I was going to go to the hospital. "No, no, no. You'll finish up here," said the Metzgers. "You'll finish the quarantine time here."

On the night Monsieur died, I knew he had died. Madame and Marie Louise were in the salon late at night talking and I couldn't hear what they said but I could hear that Marie Louise was crying and I knew what had happened. The next morning, Madame's best friend, Madame Blanche, came over. She came to tell me that Monsieur had died. I acted as if I didn't know a thing about it but of course I knew it already. I said, "I've got to go to the hospital." I had a couple of more weeks of the quarantine. This time they didn't demur. They agreed that it would be best. There was to be a funeral, and Madame was upset and little Georges was still sick.

So, Mickie had to get a taxi to come and get me. I went in my bathrobe, shaky on my feet, out to the taxi. The taxi driver, who was an emotional Italian type, a laboring man, said when he saw the sign on the door, he wasn't going to take me to the hospital. Mickie persuaded him. She said there was a glass window between the front and back seat and he should shut it. She said that she would pay him extra. He chattered the whole way to the hospital but he took me. Of course, Mickie could not come near me but she shepherded me into the taxi. She was wonderful! She paid the driver before I got in the car. He took me, growling all the way, talking under his breath; he was upset. But I guess he needed the money. So, he got me to the hospital and I went in, in my bathrobe, for two more weeks.

Pretty soon, my parents came and I talked to them on the phone. My father did everything he could think of to help. Madame was terribly nervous. She had four children to educate and she didn't have a job and professors didn't make very much money and she was very worried about the future of her family. So my father did everything he could think of. He told her he wanted to pay extra for heat she had used because I was sick. He paid extra for all the special foods. At first she said no, but eventually she took everything that she felt all right about taking. It was all extremely difficult and very sad. It makes me--after all this time--still want to cry. I was very fond of Monsieur.

And so, I went off to the hospital. I had a little roommate who also had scarlet fever. She was about eight and she was Italian. She'd never heard any fairy stories. So, I amused myself and her for the next two weeks by telling her about Cinderella and the Three Bears. She just loved it because she

really hadn't heard any of those things that an eight-year-old here would have known. I told her about Cinderella and Hansel and Gretel and the Three Pigs and every story I could think of.

The doctor's nephew had taken me out a time or two and had invited me to go to parties. He was an intern there. He came in every day. When he had time he'd sit and talk to me. That was fun. So, the last two weeks weren't quite so bad.

My skin peeled. I've never had a sunburn; I don't burn very easily. But I peeled in sheets, just sheets. Then, of course, they had to fumigate the room at the Metzgers where I had been. My father paid for that, of course. My parents did everything they could think of to make it easier for Madame. Then they decided to take us off to Normandy so I could recuperate and get back some strength. By then it was spring, of course.

Recuperation in Normandy and Studies in Austria##

LaBerge: You were just telling me you got to the hotel in Normandy and you fainted.

Jurs: As we checked in to a hotel on the beach (at Le Lavandou) I was following my father. He'd gone in ahead to check us in. He'd made reservations. I wasn't supposedly contagious anymore. But I had been really sick and I was unsteady and very weak and feeble. I walked in and fainted. Mickie was there, too, but I don't know where Mother was. Anyway, I fainted and caused a lot of trouble.

It was a very pleasant hotel on a lovely beach. Mickie and I went to the beach every day. There were some nice Britishers there. We thought they were old men, but charming, men of about thirty who were taking a break. There weren't any girls of their age so they picked up with us. Mickie and I had smoked for a long time (since I was fourteen). People really didn't know it was a health hazard in our era. Our parents didn't really know about it. These young men offered us a cigarette. Mickie turned it down but I took one and I smoked it.

LaBerge: [Laughter] On your sick bed.

Jurs: Yes. And I smoked several on the beach with them. One day, my father, who liked to swim, ambled down to the beach and the guy passed a cigarette to him. He smoked, too. (He later died of emphysema. So you know that he was a heavy smoker.) He took one

and then the young man passed one to me. I was being a lady of the world so I took one and I thought, "Oh, my father's going to say, 'What the hell are you doing?!'" But he didn't. He lit it for me which was very decent of him and I was appreciative that he didn't let me down.

LaBerge: And gallant. [Laughter]

Jurs: Yes. And then he didn't say anything about it until afterwards, after we went into the hotel. I was very grateful to him for that.

LaBerge: Well, you must be eighteen or nineteen by now.

Jurs: I was eighteen. We hadn't intended to go home to Des Moines until June and it was now March or April. So we decided to go to Vienna, which my parents had badly wanted to visit. Mickie and I didn't know any German. We decided to have three months there and then go back to Des Moines for the summer before I went to college. They'd think what to do about Mickie's education. She hadn't yet graduated from high school. I didn't know whether I was going to get to go to Stanford. But I took the aptitude test after I got home to Des Moines. I also took other tests. They accepted me. I got high marks on the aptitude test partly because I'd had a smattering three months of German and lots of French.

We'd also studied in Vienna. We had a woman who took us to galleries and the opera and to a lot of cultural things going on in Vienna. Mickie and I each had a boyfriend. Mine was very serious. (He was ten years older than I.) We learned a lot of German in our Viennese stay and learned other things as well.

Floating Down The Danube, 1932

Jurs: [During our three-month sojourn in Vienna, I met Poldi (Leopold) Michel at a so-called "ball" (really a lively dance given in the public rooms of a local club). He was a twenty-eight-year-old engineer who had always lived in Vienna and Czechoslovakia. His father was a well-known writer with land and connections in the Boeme Wald in Czechoslovakia, until the First World War a part of the Austrian empire. He spoke fluent English and after that dance became a friend and a constant visitor. Among other interesting dates, he took me twice on what were, to me, wonderful and surprising outings. He told me that in the spring the "heurige" along the Danube opened with samples of the

first newly-made wines. (Heurige means, I think, "having to do with today.") We took a tram up the Danube River to a shoreline restaurant, one of many. He had brought two waterproof bags for our clothes and, after we had eaten a delightful lunch with a glass of new wine, we changed into bathing suits, put our clothes into his two waterproof bags, tied them to our waists and went down a steep ladder into the water. The Danube, then, was not polluted (I think) but it was not a "beautiful blue Danube" even then. It was brown in color and it looked a little disappointing to this visitor from Iowa. But it was cool and the current was wonderfully gentle. It carried us, along with other weekend swimmers and small boats, gently down to Vienna. Part way down we got out, climbed a small ladder at another "heurige", had a second glass of wine or another cool drink, rested and eventually climbed back down the ladder into the brown water and drifted on down to Vienna. When we arrived at the right place we got out, changed out of our bathing suits and took the streetcar to the place where I was living. We did that twice and I remember those two colorful expeditions with enormous pleasure.]¹

When we got back to Des Moines, I was getting ready to go to Stanford, and Northwestern accepted Mickie on the basis of good grades and also the fact that we'd had all these two years of experience. She majored in anthropology at Northwestern, got a master's degree at Columbia and later a Ph.D. at Cal. She's married to George Foster, now an emeritus anthropology professor at Cal, the University of California. She is a linguistics scientist and in demand for speeches and seminars in her field. Her name is Mary LeCron Foster.

¹This material was added by Mrs. Jurs during the editing process.

III STANFORD UNIVERSITY, 1932-1935

Choosing Stanford

LaBerge: Well, so, should we start you off at Stanford? How did you decide on Stanford?

Jurs: Oh, well, my parents had a friend who was really between their age and mine and who had gone to Stanford and who came from Marshalltown, Iowa. He was a bachelor and was probably in his thirties. He thought Stanford was the most marvelous place in the whole world. It appealed to me. I hadn't ever been to California.

I'd seen Vassar and had thought I would like to go there. My various relatives went East to college: Mike and John Cowles to Harvard; Russell Cowles to Dartmouth. My cousin Gardie later went to Harvard. They tended to go East to school. I was the first one of the grandchildren to go West. But I think I just liked the idea of not doing what everybody else did. My dad had been to California and he thought it was a lovely place. He liked gardens and flowers and the climate. I had never been there but I liked the idea.

So we all agreed that that's where I would go and Mickie would go to Northwestern. There was one minor problem. My mother had graduated twenty-five years after her mother from Northwestern. I would have graduated twenty-five years after my mother and my mother, before that, twenty-five years after her mother. I think my mother was a little disappointed that I didn't want to go there.

Mickie Studies Anthropology at Northwestern and Meets George Foster

Jurs: Mickie went to Northwestern and it was just right for her. Mickie said she took an anthropology course out of curiosity and she said to herself, "This is it! This is it!" She knew right away what she wanted to do.

There she met George Foster who had grown up in Ottumwa, Iowa. He'd gone first to Harvard. He did not like Harvard. George's father was president of Morrell Packing Company and his grandfather had started the company. George was the oldest son and it was thought that he would be a businessman like his father. So he went to the Harvard Business School. He hated every minute of it and didn't like Harvard at all. Later he went to Northwestern and discovered anthropology and he and Mickie met in a class there.

Majoring in French at Stanford

LaBerge: And then you, what did you major in at Stanford?

Jurs: Well, I majored in French but I didn't have to take any French. I was two years behind myself in school, because of our European stay. I don't know why that seemed so important but I wanted to get out in three years. So, I took extra units at Stanford and I went to the French department authorities and asked if I could get credit in French. I offered to take any tests they could give me. We'd taken European history, French history, and French literature, but we didn't get credit for any of them. I took any examination that they could give me including grammar. Therefore, I got almost all my French requirements out of the way. I did have to take a couple of required courses in French but I really majored in English. I thought I'd like to write and I took a lot of such courses. But my declared major was French because of the extra credits.

I also went to the German department and said that I could at least pass tests for beginning German. I passed very well because we'd learned to really speak German. I had also had a boyfriend who was Austrian which helped to improve my conversational skills. He spoke good English. He was ten years older than I and he was very serious. He wrote me reams of letters and I really thought I was going to marry him. I was only eighteen and he was twenty-eight.

Eventually he came to this country and ended up at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] as a professor, a very bright guy. His father had been a famous writer in what had been the Austrian empire, including Czechoslovakia. Mickie reminded me not long ago that I had said that I was going to marry Poldi and have a lot of little blonde children! [Laughter] He was very blonde and very tan. I decided I didn't want to be an expatriate and I was too young anyway. And after all, he was twenty-eight, you see. I wrote a letter to him from Stanford and he reacted badly. He came to the United States anyway.

Eugene Jurs

Jurs: Dad wanted Mickie and me to go on a last pack trip into the Rockies before the family broke up and I got married. That's what we did and we were planning the wedding before I went. I had in mind much more the sort of wedding people might have today. We wanted to have a small wedding, very informal and very casual.

I wouldn't pick out silver and register for china and crystal. I got engaged in May and we were married the following August. My Stanford friends gave me a shower before I went home and gave me some pottery, but I did not want silver and china at all. My grandmother said, "Bunny, you can't do that!" She said, "All your relatives will want to give you a present," and there was a very nice store in Des Moines that carried Jensen silver. So, she picked out a Jensen pattern for me.

LaBerge: She picked it out?

Jurs: She picked it out. I said, "But I don't really want any silver!" But she gave us twelve knives, twelve forks, and twelve spoons in the acorn pattern. I have enough Jensen silver now to feed fifty-five people; not that many knives but I do have forks and spoons. We've had fifty or sixty people for dinner; by using dessert forks and having something that doesn't have to be cut up, I can take care of fifty-five people.

I had gotten together, before we went on the pack trip, a list of people we wanted to invite; a smallish list. My mother got out the invitations while I was gone, including Poldi. He was by then in Iowa City. The reason he came to Iowa was because of me and also there was a famous Viennese surgeon at the medical school there. Vienna had such good doctors in those days and the surgeon was a friend of his family's who had come to Iowa

City--where the university is--which had a very good medical school. That was the only person from Vienna that Poldi knew and so he came to Iowa City while he looked around for some kind of an engineering job. He ended up at MIT. He had a very good background and a good education. He knew that I was being married. I cannot see why he would come to the wedding but he did.

Well, it turned out that it was a very pretty outdoor wedding. My father loved flowers and had a very lovely garden. And the wedding was outdoors. The wedding was lovely, but I had wanted a very simple wedding, simpler than it turned out to be.

LaBerge: Had Gene grown up in California?

Jurs: Yes, Gene and his twin and his other brother, his father and mother and his aunt all came on the train from California. His father had started a small successful manufacturing business in Berkeley and Gene was working there. They all came three days ahead of the wedding.

LaBerge: Well, where had you met your husband?

Jurs: When I was at Stanford. He was already working at Shand and Jurs.

LaBerge: Had he gone to Stanford?

Jurs: Yes, he didn't finish but he went for a couple of years. His twin, Pete, was getting his doctorate in chemistry at Stanford and Al, his brother, two years younger, was at Stanford. Al went out with a friend of mine who lived right down the hall in our freshman dormitory.

A friend of mine had invited me to go to Yosemite with her parents and some other girls. Al's friend, and mine, told Al that we would be there in Yosemite. (Al and Gene were to be there with their parents.) Gene and I met and we liked each other right away. Gene and I didn't want to leave the campfire that night. We wanted to go right on talking. Everybody else wanted to go back to the camp. It got late.

I got back to Stanford and he went back to Berkeley. He wrote me a card. He couldn't remember my last name. But he wrote it to Bunny at Roble Hall. I got it and I was about ready to go home for the summer when he asked me out. I had a date [already]. But it was to be a long date: In the afternoon we were to go on a picnic and then come back and change and then we were going out for dinner or going dancing or something. This

man was a graduate in engineering school. I was about to go home to Des Moines and I knew this other man would ask me out in the fall, but I didn't know whether Gene ever would if he didn't see me soon again. I thought he'd forget all about me.

So, I told my date that I could go out with him at night but that I was busy during the day, that I had to study. Actually, I guess I went out with Gene at night and with the other man during the day. That was a week or two after the Memorial Day weekend. Gene wrote to me all summer and when I got back, of course, we went out some more.

LaBerge: I see. And tell me, again, his father's company.

Jurs: Shand and Jurs Company. It was located in west Berkeley. They made safety equipment for oil tanks and tankers, valves and such things. It was a small and prosperous business. Gene's father was a very intelligent man who never went to college. He never even went beyond the sixth grade or eighth grade but he was a genius. He invented a lot of things and got his business started on a shoestring. It prospered and sold equipment everywhere. Much later Gene and I went to Bali and saw Shand and Jurs equipment on gas tanks there. Another time Gene went on a dogsled trip in Greenland and saw Shand and Jurs equipment there. It was a small and prosperous little business, which they eventually sold. It was swallowed up and was later moved to Chicago.

LaBerge: Sold it. In about what year?

Jurs: Well after we were married. Gene was probably forty-five by then. Then he looked around for something else to do. Our children were partly grown and he didn't want to be idle. He belonged to something called the Heresy Club at Berkeley which had a bunch of professors and also some businessmen as members. It was a discussion group and Gene liked it very much.

There was a professor named Joe Harris who had invented the Harris Votomatic machine on which we now all vote. It was the first electronic voting machine. Gene became the managing vice president in charge of production of this little business. That's what he did for quite a while. Atlanta, Georgia, was the first city in this country to use those electronic voting machines. They weren't even sold here in California for quite a while.

LaBerge: Well, so, you met him after your first year at Stanford and then you had two more years here.

Jurs: Yes, I had other friends and we weren't engaged until much later.

IV MORE ON FAMILY INFLUENCES

[Interview 6: September 9, 1994] ##

Henry Wallace and the FDR Administration

LaBerge: Well, today we were going to sort of finish up and add extra pieces to things we've already talked about and things we haven't. But on the phone you told me a little bit about your parents moving to Washington to work with Henry Wallace during the FDR administration. Why don't you tell me that story?

Jurs: Okay, Henry Wallace came from Des Moines and of course, that's where I grew up. My father was a very good friend of his and my mother was a very good friend of theirs, too. In fact, the senior Wallaces had a big house right next door to my grandparents' house. I believe that his father had founded the magazine, Wallace's Farmer, which was a publication for farmers around the Middle West, as well as several other publications.

Henry Wallace was a liberal and was invited by Roosevelt to be secretary of agriculture, which he did do. He recruited my father, who was his good friend, to be an assistant, not assistant secretary but a special assistant to him. My father was delighted to do it.

It was a heady time in Washington because a lot of things were happening and a lot of changes were being made. That era was sort of a crusading time for many people, New Deal people. It was quite exciting.

My mother liked being in Washington, too. She had always worked. She had produced a very good book page every Sunday for the Des Moines paper, a page which was read all over Iowa.

LaBerge: What was the name of the newspaper?

Jurs: The Des Moines Register & Tribune. The Register was the morning paper and the Tribune the evening paper. My mother was a book critic. That's one reason we always had so many books at our house because all the new books and reissues were sent to her for review. Then afterwards she could do with them what she wanted to, sell them or give them away or whatever. This was the first time she really had not worked at a regular job.

In fact, she, in contrast to most people of her age group, just always had worked from the time I was three and they had moved into the house they built in Des Moines. She'd had a secretary every day. She always said she wanted to be free when my sister and I came home from school.

She had written a lot of children's books and collaborated with various people on other books. She had a page in the Better Homes and Gardens magazine which, of course, was published in Des Moines, a page about clubs and club material. It was odd because she really wasn't involved in that kind of thing at all. She was good at knowing what people would be interested in. And she also had a syndicated--syndicated all over the United States--poetry column, light not like Edgar Guest but light in a different way, under the name of Martha Hart. So you see, she was very busy.

LaBerge: So Martha Hart was her pseudonym?

Jurs: Only for that syndicated poetry column. It was light stuff, very light stuff. She could knock those things off easily, very easily, and did. For instance, I remember when Mickie and I were very little she just suddenly began to sing us a little rhyme. I guess she had thought about it before. How did it begin? It was like this: "Once upon a time, there were two little girls. One had straight hair, one had curls." (I was the one with the curly hair.)

LaBerge: That was you?

Jurs: "One had straight hair, one had curls. One was tall and thin, one was fat and funny, one was Marigold and the other was Bunny." My sister's name is Mary, but she is usually called Mickie these days. Mother called me Bunny to the end of her life, not a name I really even liked. She knocked off little rhymes with ease just the way she also could play the piano by ear. She had a lot of talents and she was both busy and a creative kind of woman with an almost full-time job, at a time when that was not done.

LaBerge: That's for sure.

Jurs: Yes. In fact, she was kind of proud, in certain circles, of the fact that she had paid the obstetrical bills when I was born. And that was before she had all these jobs. But she had sold poems. Gene's father said they got his twins, Gene and his brother Pete, for fifty dollars. That's what the obstetrician charged. Fifty dollars went an awful lot farther then, of course, than it does now. So my mother was proud of that contribution.

LaBerge: It says something about her influence on you, though, too, because I would think although you haven't been paid for what you've done, you've done every type of job.

Jurs: I've had a full-time job, almost a full-time job. And my sister has, too. After she had two children, she went and got her doctorate in anthropology. She already had a master's degree from Columbia. She's always done research in linguistic anthropology and social anthropology and for a while taught at Cal State Hayward. I mean, she's had a real career.

I was offered a couple of jobs and then I was frequently asked if I would like to apply for certain jobs. But Gene had a good job with his family business and we didn't really need the money. I kind of wish I'd taken a couple of them but anyway, I didn't. I made my own profession. But yes, we were sort of expected to, Mickie and I, had a role to play. My mother's two sisters weren't like that at all. They didn't ever have jobs. They were interested and interesting but they didn't have jobs.

Anyway, when my father and mother went to Washington that was the year I first went to Stanford. My freshman year was 1932-33 and I was able to graduate in three years, by taking a lot of extra credits and passing some tests and one thing and another. That's when Roosevelt was elected [1932]. [Herbert] Hoover lived in Palo Alto and he also was a friend of my grandfather's and had written a letter in support of me when I applied to Stanford. It wasn't as hard to get in then, of course, but you did have to get good grades. I belonged to the last class of five hundred women at Stanford.

When we came back from Europe we'd not even thought very much about what colleges we were going to go to. I had sort of thought about Stanford. Most of the members in my family tended to go East to school and always thought I'd probably go to Vassar [College] or someplace like that.

That was in the days when fewer people went to college. I had good grades and belonged to the honor society. But it helped, I'm sure, that Hoover wrote about me. He didn't even

know me but he knew my grandfather very well. My grandfather had served under Hoover on what was then called the Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

LaBerge: Which grandfather is this?

Jurs: Gardner Cowles. He was proud of the fact that the Reconstruction Finance Corporation--I don't honestly understand exactly what their role was but I know that that organization had provided money and impetus for the building of the Golden Gate Bridge.

It's really funny because I'm a pretty staunch Democrat and Hoover wrote a good letter for me. We had decided late to go to college. Mickie went to Northwestern [University]. She had not even graduated from high school because we went abroad for those two years before she had finished. But they took her. Northwestern was where both my parents had gone. My mother had graduated from Northwestern twenty-five years after my grandmother Cowles.

It was amusing that Hoover wrote a letter for me. Then also, much later on, when I was a delegate to the White House Conference on Children in 1973, I think, I was named a [Governor Ronald] Reagan delegate. Reagan didn't know me but he could name certain people as delegates. I always thought that was very funny. Two important Republicans who did things for me and I have never reciprocated, even by voting for them!

LaBerge: Although you have told me that you've supported several Republican candidates who you agree are good people.

Jurs: Yes, especially at the local level.

LaBerge: Dick Spees for the city council.

Jurs: Yes. And George Vukasin and let me see, several others. I'm not one who thinks that all Republicans are bad. My grandfather Cowles was an arch-Republican.

Parents' Life in Washington, D.C., and Vice President Wallace

LaBerge: What did your mother do in Washington?

Jurs: She didn't work but she had a very interesting time there. My parents bought a house in Georgetown. Well, she hadn't worked either, of course, during the two years we were in Europe, but

she and my dad were writing some books together. And then my dad got so busy in Washington they didn't really do much along those lines.

But she led the kind of life that most wives of husbands working in Washington did. She enjoyed it. Of course, Mrs. Wallace, Ilo Wallace, was there. She was a very good friend, a close friend of my mother's. They were invited to many events.

Their life there affected me very little. When Gene and I got married in 1935 my parents were still in Washington. We lived for a couple of years in the New York area while Gene was working in the Shand and Jurs New York office. We went to Washington quite often, of course, to see my parents. It wasn't very far away. Over holidays, like Christmas and Thanksgiving we always went there. Occasionally we were included in big receptions.

Gene and I went to the White House and shook hands with Roosevelt at one of them. That was interesting. Men couldn't even wear a tux. They had to wear a dress suit and Gene didn't even own a tux. He certainly didn't own a dress suit. He borrowed one from my Grandfather LeCron. It fitted him pretty well. It was a tail coat, dress suit. We got all dressed up and that was hardly the way we usually lived. We lived in a small apartment in Bronxville, New York, by then.

But that was my only connection except that my father talked endlessly, interestingly, about the way things were in the New Deal. When Wallace became vice president, later on in the FDR years, he asked my father and my mother to go with them when Cardenez, the father of the man who lately ran for president in Mexico, was inaugurated as president of Mexico. Wallace had to go as a delegate from the United States or to represent the United States at this inauguration. My parents went and stayed at the embassy with the Wallaces.

Actually, that time things did not work out well because my mother got malaria while they were there. She had been bitten by a mosquito.

LaBerge: In Mexico?

Jurs: In Mexico. She was very sick and could not leave the embassy where they were staying. But they wouldn't let my mother go to a hospital. Wallace went back to Washington and Mrs. Wallace, too, leaving my father and mother at the embassy in Mexico City. She was really awfully sick. They thought she couldn't be moved. They had to have nurses around the clock for her.

She had to stay there quite a long time. She's always said she felt like The Man Who Came to Dinner; it was embarrassing because they had been invited for, perhaps, a week. They stayed four weeks, maybe--I've forgotten exactly how long it was--until she was strong enough to go back to Washington. For a while, the malaria recurred. Eventually she got over it. But for several years, periodically, she would have chills and fever.

LaBerge: Do you know if the ambassador was Anne Morrow Lindbergh's father?

Jurs: No, it wasn't. I'm sure I would have remembered that. I'm sure it was a Democrat also and the Morrow family always was Republican. Perhaps Morrow came later. I don't know. But I'm pretty sure that during the Roosevelt years it would have been a Democrat. I don't know who it was.

LaBerge: What did your father do when Henry Wallace was vice president?

Jurs: He was also a special assistant to the secretary. He was very close to Wallace. In fact they, every morning, walked through Rock Creek Park up from Georgetown. I think they drove partway and then walked the rest of the way. They liked to get exercise. They got very interested in boomerangs. One of them, maybe Wallace, had gone to Australia and brought some back home. My father always had many hobbies and Wallace was like that, too. So they perfected the boomerangs and they tried different boomerangs. If you threw them properly and it was a well-made boomerang, it would return. So they threw boomerangs as they walked through Rock Creek Park which was a very typical way for both of them to behave. They hurled themselves into hobbies, both of them. That's why they were such good friends.

The Ranch in Calaveras County

LaBerge: Were your parents in Washington during the war?

Jurs: Yes. I think they were there ten years and Roosevelt was president for twelve years, wasn't he? I think they were there for ten years. Then they left and came to California and bought a house in Berkeley. Later they bought the ranch at Calaveras County which came eventually to Mickie and me. Gene and I shared it with the Fosters, my sister and brother-in-law, for quite a while after our parents had died. We finally sold our share to them.

In the meantime, along the way, just about the time our first daughter was born, or just before that, Gene's father had bought a piece to retire to, in Calaveras County. And when my parents retired out here later, Gene's father, who was fond of my parents, tried to interest them in the next ranch, which was up for sale. My father liked the area very much and eventually bought the adjoining ranch.

A lovely river, the Mokelumne, goes through the property. My sister and brother-in-law still own it and we were there over Labor Day weekend. My father hesitated at first. He liked to swim awfully well. It's at about 2,500 feet, I think. Anyway, the nights are almost always cool and you almost always have to pull a blanket up before morning. It may be hot in the daytime but because my father loved swimming so much it was fine for him. But he hesitated because the river was good for swimming but very cold and not terribly deep.

Gene's father wanted to entice him. There were two small man-made lakes on the part of the property my father-in-law had bought. He didn't care about swimming and offered to sell to my father the piece with the two little lakes on it. That was wonderful for all of us. Gene had two brothers who between them had nine children. Later, we'd stay at the LeCrons' house and the others would stay at the Jurs' adjoining ranch.

The cousins and our children had wonderful times together. They were up there often, at least on the weekends. Our Karen's birthday is in May so she didn't celebrate there. Emily's birthday is in July and Christy's in August so they usually had some kind of party, a cousin party with all those children. There was so much for children to do there!

It was really lovely because there was the lake where we swam. It is a very pretty lake and also big enough so that it has a small island. There were, and still are, rowboats and canoes there and the kids had a wonderful time always.

But later, Gene and I decided we really didn't want to own a place where the climate was so warm. So we sold our share and built a pool, instead, at home. We could go up there still. My parents were still there and both my sister and Pete Jurs have always been very good about inviting us.

When Gene's mother died, Gene's father didn't want the lower ranch anymore. Pete, Gene's twin, took it over. Pete and John Austin, a lawyer friend, shared the lower ranch. John was president of Morrison & Foerster in San Francisco. He and his wife were very good friends of Gene's and mine and their four

children and ours were friends. John had been thinking about buying a place in the country and neither of them could then afford a place alone. Pete and John shared the lower ranch after Gene's mother died and his father didn't want to go up there anymore. Then when my father died, he left the ranch to Mickie and me. Actually, it was left to my mother with the idea that it would come to Mickie and me at her death. We've been a close family and have spent a lot of time together there.

The New Deal

LaBerge: Any stories like when your father would talk about the New Deal in Washington? Anything you remember particularly?

Jurs: He was very fascinated with the experience. Henry Wallace earlier had developed a hybrid corn. He was an inventive, scientific sort of a man. This hybrid corn produced much more corn per acre than anybody had ever been able to produce before.

Let's see, perhaps it was his brother who started (or perhaps they did it together) a hybrid seed corn business in Iowa. I think the people in the U.S. Agriculture Department believed very strongly that under the New Deal there need never be hunger again in this country. It looked as if prosperity would last forever although there were many wrongs to be corrected, racial and civil liberty wrongs.

My father was fascinated with that world and loved it. They made many friends, Nelson Rockefeller¹ among them. They always were invited, a nice, large group on Sundays to the Rockefellers. Rockefeller was a Republican, but a liberal Republican, and he was popular, I think, in Washington. My dad didn't think he was very intellectual but was fun to be with. And let's see, now. Who else?

Rex Tugwell in the Department of Agriculture was a very good friend of theirs and--

LaBerge: What did he do?

¹ From 1940 to 1944, Nelson Rockefeller was coordinator of the Office of Inter-American Affairs

Jurs: He was very influential in the New Deal but I can't think of his exact role there.¹

Philosophy of the Des Moines Register##

LaBerge: Just from you talking about this, I can see an influence on you. Well, obviously parents influence their children but--

Jurs: Well, yes. We couldn't help but be influenced. They were always involved in politics or at least were very much interested. My father was a Democrat and when he went to work for the paper in Des Moines, my grandfather was a Hoover Republican and his two sons who were working on the paper, who were somewhat younger than my father, were Republicans. The papers were Republican. By the time Roosevelt ran the second time, John and Mike Cowles did support Roosevelt. My grandfather was not as enthusiastic.

It was a very fair kind of a paper. In contrast to the way things are done today, they did not want to slant news at all if they could avoid it. The news can be slanted by just the wording of the headlines. They thought that the editorial page should be the place for opinions. They were opinionated. They had originally supported Hoover. Then Roosevelt was doing what seemed to be a lot of good and they came around.

My father worked in many different departments at the newspaper. He had had no journalistic experience, but he came to Des Moines to work for his father-in-law because my mother didn't like Cheyenne where they were then living. It was perhaps too Wild West for her but he had loved it. They put him in different departments so he'd learn different aspects of the newspaper business. He ended up as one of the editors.

LaBerge: They must have let him write his opinion, which was different.

Jurs: They did. But they, of course, by that time were more liberal. I guess you'd call the paper a liberal Republican paper which had supported Roosevelt during part of his long term.

¹ Rexford Guy Tugwell was assistant secretary (1933) and under secretary (1934-1937) of agriculture, and as a member of the Brain Trust he helped draw up the Agricultural Adjustment Act.

My father was the Democrat of the group. We went over almost every Sunday for dinner at my grandparents' house. I may have talked about it before.

LaBerge: Oh, you have talked about that and all the people that you met.

Jurs: It was such a big family and everybody was expected to come for dinner. My father chafed at that sometimes because he had so many hobbies and every once in a while he would say he just wanted to work on whatever his current hobby was. Dinner was always at one o'clock you see, and it cut right into the day.

It was interesting because the others often differed with what my father thought, but they were interested and respectful of each other. They really respected him a lot and I don't think that would happen always.

LaBerge: Nowadays, yes.

Jurs: Nowadays it probably wouldn't and maybe not in some other families then either. My father was funny. He had a funny sense of humor and he was fun to be with. People liked him. So he had lots of different friends. My father was the sort who, if he liked somebody he just liked him for what he was.

LaBerge: Well, shall we go on to something else now, unless you have more.

Jurs: No, I don't. Because I really didn't know anything about the Roosevelt years except that it was interesting to hear about Tugwell and the various people my parents met. If names are mentioned then I often can think, "Oh, yes, my father talked about him." A few of them we met. Mostly we were with our family when we'd come to Washington for the weekend. We'd drive down to Washington for Christmas and for other holidays. We certainly weren't a part of the Washington life in any way.

Early Married Life in New York

LaBerge: Well, anything more on the time you spent in New York because we didn't really talk about that on tape before. What did you do when you were in New York?

Jurs: I didn't work. Gene and I had one set of friends when we came. I had graduated in June from Stanford and we were married in August and then drove across the country to New York visiting Quebec and Montreal on the way.

That was at the time when the Dionne quintuplets were born. Quintuplets were very unusual. Now, because of the pills people can take to get pregnant, it has turned out to be moderately common. We visited the town in Ontario where the quintuplets lived. It was an astounding event then.

LaBerge: Where was the Shand and Jurs office? In New York City?

Jurs: Yes, close to New York Central Station. Gene commuted daily. I had belonged in college to the Delta Gamma sorority and a very good friend lived near. This is a digression but I had joined the sorority although I really thought that it would be better if they did not exist. There were nine sororities and eventually they were outlawed.

LaBerge: Oh, outlawed at Stanford?

Jurs: At Stanford. I was a Delta Gamma and I became first the rush captain and then I became the president of the sorority. At the same time, there was a movement on to get rid of sororities. I agreed and went to meetings about outlawing them, joined all of that movement. But when I was president, the regional secretary of the sorority came to see me because she had heard that here I was not being loyal to the sorority by participating in this movement.

The president of one of the sororities had had her pin taken away because she had really been more active in that movement than I. The Delta Gammas were pondering about doing that with me. But I told them the truth, that I didn't really believe in sororities but that as long as they had them and my best friends were all members, I wanted to be with my friends. And that was true. So they didn't lift my pin after all. In fact they asked me to be province secretary later, after I was married. I was not interested in doing that so, of course, I turned it down.

I loved Stanford while I was there but I have never understood people who go eternally and constantly to their reunions for many, many years. I thought that the people I cared about were people I would see anyway and so, why go? It was a good chapter of my life that I liked but I had moved on to another phase.

Betty Kiley, Betty Hooper Kiley, had transferred from Vassar after two years there to come to Stanford for her last two years. She and I became very good friends. She was married six weeks after we were, to a man who was ten years older than she, who worked for Citibank in New York City. She came from Mount

Vernon, New York. When we were married, we first sublet an apartment in Mount Vernon because of Tom and Betty.

We went to their wedding, six weeks after we were married. They were the only people we knew in the area. Betty didn't know very many people either because she'd been away, first at Vassar and then at Stanford. And so they were our only friends at first. None of us had very much money. We went on picnics all the time. Oh, we had a wonderful time.

He eventually became the president of a bank in Wilkes-Barre [Pennsylvania]. He rather recently retired from that bank. He's pretty old because he's ten years older than Betty and I'm eighty-one. We see them still rather often. They now have a daughter who lives in California and so they always look us up when they come. We pick up exactly where we left off each time.

They're our dear, dear friends. We saw a great deal of them and liked them. Eventually they had three daughters just about the age of our four but all went to college in the East and lived in the East until the oldest daughter settled in Vallejo with her husband.

LaBerge: Tom's last name is Kiley?

Jurs: Yes. He was always handsome and he was rosy-cheeked and dark-haired. His hair turned white and he has dark eyes. He's still very handsome. They have done interesting things. They, after their children were all raised, decided to go into the--It isn't the Peace Corps but it is an organization which places executives in Latin America. He trained bankers in American business techniques. I love them both. After all these years we just chatter along exactly as if we saw them every day. We see them about every other year now.

LaBerge: That's when you know they're really good friends and you don't have to catch up with them.

Jurs: They were having babies at the same time we were. He was getting started in his career when we first knew them as a couple. Then later a funny thing happened. We went on one of those so-called "adventure cruises." We've gone on several of them, Lindblad-type cruises. We went on one where we flew to the foot of South America and then traveled up the west coast from Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego. We loved those trips. There are seldom more than fifty or sixty people on these ships. They always have very knowledgeable people to tell about birds or fish or ocean currents. There were anthropologists also to tell us about the customs of the local people.

The first night that we were on this ship, having just taken off from Ushuaia, Gene and I went to have cocktails with the other passengers. We didn't know anybody. We were just two of us together. And I began talking to a man who came from New York. We were probably in our seventies, or sixties anyway, by then.

I talked to this man who said that he lived in New York City and that he had always worked for Citibank. You cast about for some connection and I said, "I've only known one person who ever worked for Citibank and this was a long time ago. His name was Tom Kiley." He said, "My God! I was best man at his wedding!" I said, "We were at their wedding, too." He called his wife over and we all exclaimed about the smallness of the world.

Then somebody else joined us. I was wearing a big silver bracelet that our daughter Cynthia had brought me one time. She worked for the Lindblad Company at one point during the summer and they were in Pakistan. He said, "You're wearing a bracelet from Pakistan." And I said, "How did you know?" He said, "Because it's very traditional and I have been in Pakistan." This was just after I'd finished talking to the Citibank man. He said, "Yes, we went on a Lindblad trip, a wonderful, a very primitive trip, not on the water, not long ago." I said, "Our youngest daughter has been working for Lindblad and she was in Pakistan. She told how hard it was that there was no water and how they bathed in about a half a cup of water each day during this camping trip." He said, "What was her name?" And I said, "Cynthia Jurs." And he said, "That was the trip that we were on!"

We were cruising up the west coast of South America and he knew her and he said how much they liked her and how dear she was. He called his wife over and he said to us, "There's somebody else you should meet because he's a Lindblad staff person and he was in Pakistan on that trip." He called him over and he was astonished to meet the parents of Cynthia. Wasn't that amazing? But that's certainly a digression.

LaBerge: No, it is fun.

Jurs: It was really fun and funny.

LaBerge: We haven't talked about any of your travels or anything either, so that's good. Well, did you, when you were in New York, stay in Mount Vernon the whole time?

Jurs: No, we sublet the apartment for just a little while, six months, I think. It was furnished. It belonged to the widow of Vincent

Youmans. He wrote musicals and during an earlier era had been a very popular songwriter in New York and all around the U.S.

But this woman was seventy or eighty by that time and we barely knew her, but this apartment came up for rent. We wanted to have a sort of a pied-à-terre while we were looking for a place to live and it was cheap. So, we took it. It was just littered with objects standing around the apartment. I asked her if it would be all right if I put some of her things away in the closet. There were things on every table top. In a room like this there would have been ten more chairs and some of them with little doilies on the back, not my taste at all. And pictures with wide gold frames. I couldn't stand it even for two or three months. I had to put all these things away. So that was a temporary rental.

Then we found a nice apartment right in Bronxville. Gene could take the train from the station right there. Shand and Jurs in New York City was right by the 42nd Street station and he could get home very easily. We had one bedroom, a small living room and a teeny little kitchenette. The size was just right and the price was okay and it was new. So, that's where we lived for the rest of the year and a half or so that we were there. It was fun.

I've often told my daughters about this. Gene and all men wore vests and three-piece suits then. I would walk from our apartment to the cleaners carrying Gene's suits and my stuff when they needed to be cleaned. I remember that a three-piece suit could go to the cleaners and come out just fine for thirty-nine cents.

LaBerge: Wow.

Jurs: So that just tells you how inexpensive things used to be. We didn't think it was cheap at all. That just stuck in my head. Anyway, we had a pleasant time there, playing around mostly with Betty and Tom and going mostly on picnics and not spending very much money and having a wonderful time. And Betty's parents were there, living in Mount Vernon, and so we met them and got very well acquainted with them. And several of Betty's school friends lived near and we got acquainted. So, we made a small circle.

Eventually Gene was to go back to Berkeley where the factory was. He had worked for them under the man who headed the New York office. They needed a new person to run the office and Gene and others found a good man and then Gene left to go back and work in the plant in Berkeley. We drove across the country. That's the only time I've ever been to Texas. Shand and Jurs did

a lot of business with Texas because they made safety equipment for the oil industry. Texas is not a place where I would want to live.

Anyway, I was happy to get to California. We rented a house on Margarido Drive in Oakland. Gene's father thought we paid 'way, 'way, 'way too much rent. It was \$67.50 a month and it had fifty-two steps up to the front door. It was not a big house but it had two bedrooms and it had an in-a-door bed and a small library so we could have quite a lot of company. A lot of people from Des Moines and Stanford liked to visit, and we had a dog and a tiny little yard.

Gene's father viewed with some alarm the fact that we were paying this awful rent. We had only one car, of course. We rented half of the two-car garage for five dollars a month, so the rent only cost us \$62.50.

LaBerge: Is that house still there on Margarido?

Jurs: Yes. It's one of those stucco houses, Spanish-style stucco houses and it was fine. Then we built. When we were able to we bought this lot. If we'd known how things were going to go and had had the cash, we would have bought six or eight lots and would have done very well. We were fortunate that there weren't very many houses here at all. The house next door was here and the one across the street. Otherwise it was vacant, just country. And oh, I loved it. I just loved it. So we built this house.



Eugene and Florence Jurs, August 30, 1935.

V FAMILY LIFE

Early Plans for Life##

LaBerge: When you were at Stanford, even before then, what did you think you were going to be doing with your life? What kind of hopes or--?

Jurs: After I graduated, I found that I was most interested in good causes and service organizations. The first one I volunteered for was Planned Parenthood. I started off doing filing and office work but I ended up assisting the doctor. After our daughters went to school and to preschool, I worked with various children's service organizations.

I think if I had gone to college in a different era, knowing what I liked, I might have majored differently. I have certain abilities, I think some organizational ability. I like that kind of work, I like networking and I like knowing different kinds of people. I would have hated to grow up in one neighborhood and only know people just like myself. Our friends are a mixture of races and interests. That's one reason I like living here. There is a course that people now can take about how to run a nonprofit agency and I might have liked that. I guess I trained myself. I think I thought--

LaBerge: That you were going to get married and have children?

Jurs: No. Yes. That's what everybody did. But, no. My mother always had a career.

LaBerge: That's right.

Jurs: And my grandmother before her had kind of a career. My parents talked a lot about how they wanted us each to be able to take

care of ourselves. I just didn't quite find what I wanted to do. Then I met Gene, you see, and then I knew I was going to get married. But I thought I didn't want to just be a housewife. I don't mean "just a housewife." I love my house and family and that's an enormous part of my life. But I would find it hard to have just done that. The world is an interesting, big place. I always told our children there are so many interesting ways to go that it's better to sample several of them.

Early Married Life in California

LaBerge: Were you happy to stay in California?

Jurs: Oh, indeed, yes. Oh, yes. I love it. I love it here. There's too much traffic now and too many people but ten years ago, it was absolutely perfect.

I love the climate and I love the variety of people and the ethnic differences. I love all of it. I frequently say to Gene, "If I could have chosen where to go, this is the place I would have chosen." And then we built our house. We were lucky because we were able to build our house before we even had any children, soon after we were married. Gene worked in the Shand and Jurs office in New York City.

LaBerge: What year did you get married?

Jurs: Nineteen thirty-five.

LaBerge: Okay, and when did you build the house?

Jurs: Nineteen thirty-nine. Our oldest daughter, Karen, was born in 1940. We've added on to our house since. We ended up with four bathrooms, six small bedrooms, one downstairs, our guest room, and our master bedroom. We had the architect design the house so that the plumbing and electricity led up and we could later add two rooms and a bath, which we did, after the war. We couldn't do it during the Second World War but we did it just after the war was over. Later then we enclosed a small deck to make another room and later built the outdoor deck and the recreation building, a separate structure. So, we've lived here all these years. It's been a very flexible house. We just close off bedrooms when we aren't using them.

Just lately, Karen and her husband, Shawn, were here and Cynthia's coming next week. When people come, we just open the

register and get the heat started in the bedrooms. We've been very lucky to be able to stay here. Emily and her family have always lived in Oakland. But everybody else is farther away. Karen is in Connecticut; Christy is in Bellevue, Washington; Cynthia is in Santa Fe [New Mexico]. Emily and Fritz have always lived in Oakland with two children.

I didn't want to be the kind of grandmother that was on call as a babysitter. I said I would love to keep the children once a week, all day. So we set aside Tuesday. I didn't do anything on Tuesday and she could bring them over at seven in the morning if she wanted and leave them all day. Ben, who graduated from Pomona [College], is now about six-feet-three in height. He and his sister, Tabitha, were here every Tuesday. I took them to preschool and picked them up later and I loved having them. Emily could leave them overnight and then come and pick them up the next morning if she wanted.

LaBerge: So, you built the house in 1939.

Jurs: Yes. So, you see, we've been here a long, long time.

LaBerge: I wonder if that's a good ending point, a good place to stop for today.

Jurs: That's fine.

Four Daughters

[Interview 2: May 18, 1994]##

LaBerge: When did you start building the house?

Jurs: We started in 1939. Karen was born in May of 1940 and we moved into the house in March of 1939. It's hard to build a house but it's fun. I think it's perhaps harder these days, I hear from various friends, and daughters and other people, who say that everything is so complicated and also so expensive.

LaBerge: The permit process sounds like a long thing to go through.

Jurs: Yes, but it was fun for us. We had a very good architect and a very good contractor, and Gene, of course, is very mechanical, so it went very, very well and very quickly.

LaBerge: Karen was born in 1940. What about your other daughters?

Jurs: The next one, Emily, was born in 1942, and then Christy in 1945. Then we had a long gap. We thought that we would stop at three, but then they all got bigger. Also this was in the days before we worried about overpopulating the earth. Anyway, we had Cynthia in 1955. Christy was ten--they were ten, thirteen, and fifteen when Cynthia was born.

Impact of World War II

LaBerge: In the midst of that was the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Jurs: Oh, yes.

LaBerge: Can you remember where you were?

Jurs: Yes, we were here. I was pregnant--I'm not quite sure who I was pregnant with--Oh, yes, Emily. We lived in our house, and of course there were blackouts. At night you had to be sure to have heavy curtains. We were very lucky--many of our friends had to go into the service, but Gene and his two brothers were all exempted because of their work.

Shand and Jurs Company became a needed [industry] for the war effort. It was a small manufacturing business that made equipment for oil tankers, for oil trucks and oil truck tanks and other safety equipment, valves and things. They converted their manufacturing to other items needed in the war effort. Gene and his brothers were exempted partly because we had children. At first men didn't have to go if there were children. But it really was mainly the war effort and what Shand and Jurs was doing that exempted them.

Many of our friends left. Our lives went on more or less the same, except of course, that certain foods were rationed, milk and sugar and flour. But if you had several little children who didn't eat very much sugar, for instance, you had plenty of everything. We had coupons for certain foods.

LaBerge: For gas also?

Jurs: And for gas, yes. Gas was limited so we had to be careful. I had many Stanford friends who lived in North Berkeley and such places, and also I had a lot of friends down towards Palo Alto. We couldn't go to see them very often. Another Stanford friend and I formed a group so that we could regularly get together for lunch so as to see some of our friends. We took turns and we

carpooled, too. We asked various friends to belong. We called it "The Sewing Club," although few of us sewed. We brought our own sandwiches, and the hostess provided dessert. The group is still operating today after all these years. It's been about fifty-five years, I think.

LaBerge: My goodness.

Jurs: The wonderful part about it is there's never been a president. In fact, for years and years, we didn't even have a rule about taking turns and where we would meet. Finally somebody said we ought to take turns alphabetically, so that we could remember whose turn it was. Well, two sisters-in-law were also members and my sister, too, but anyway, it's still going. Some of the old friends have died. A few have moved away and we added a few more, and it's still going. We aren't under any obligation to attend but most of us attend quite regularly.

LaBerge: Do you still bring your own lunches?

Jurs: No, we don't do that now, but we do have certain rules. The food got a little bit fancy for a while. So we have a few rules. It's supposed to be a one-dish or one salad meal with a rather simple dessert. I like it because of the mix of people. My sister belongs, too. She lives in North Berkeley. One, who died, was an interior decorator, my sister is an anthropologist--we just all did and do a variety of things.

But otherwise, the war hadn't interfered drastically with us. We were of course worried and thought about it a lot and we had so many friends who had to serve in the army or the navy, but as far as we ourselves were concerned, it didn't have much of an impact on us.

LaBerge: Did you notice an impact on the Bay Area, with a lot of workers coming in from the shipyards?

Jurs: Oh yes. It began to grow. Lots of navy people would come through here. We have a number of friends who came during the war on their way to wherever they were going, liked the area and decided, when the war was over, that they'd move back to California. So yes, it changed a lot. The war did affect children. One of our children, Emily, when she was two or three, began to worry about the Japanese bombing. She hid her balloons in her closet "so the Japs wouldn't get them." She got quite apprehensive, but I don't think it affected the other girls very much.

LaBerge: If Christy was born in 1945, that's sort of the end of the war.

LaBerge: If Christy was born in 1945, that's sort of the end of the war.

Jurs: Yes. We have so many good friends who were very uprooted during the war, who had to serve, so we've actually been very lucky. We were able to build our house early and were able to stay right in it all this time.

VI A LIFE OF VOLUNTEERISM

How It Began: Planned Parenthood and Nursery School

LaBerge: Tell when you started in on volunteering. Did you start when your children were young, in preschools, or something like that?

Jurs: Yes, I did. As I mentioned, I volunteered for Planned Parenthood, then got involved in the schools. Christy went to a cooperative preschool. The other girls went to a private preschool in the neighborhood that wasn't a cooperative. I liked Christy's preschool better. We all had to help one morning a week; I liked it. I got a lot out of it. I got on the board somehow.

LaBerge: Is this by any chance the one at Montclair, or the one at Lake Temescal?

Jurs: It was Sequoia.

LaBerge: Oh, okay.

Jurs: I liked it. And I found myself on the board, and I liked that. Then along about that time the bigger girls were in school and I went to the Montclair PTA [Parent Teacher Association]. The girls went to the Montclair [Elementary] school. I found myself on the Montclair PTA board. I was very active because--I got interested in a lot of the things they do.

Lincoln Child Center, 1966-1975

Jurs: Then because of that, someone who knew me through the Montclair PTA asked me to be on the Lincoln Child Center board. I was on

that board for quite a long time. I got very involved in it. I hadn't known anything about mental health services for children before. I thought that Lincoln did a marvelous job, so I threw myself into it. I became, along the way, chairman of a two-year, long-range planning committee study [1968-1970], so I learned a lot.

Lincoln Child Center at that time--and I'm sure it's still true--had a very well-organized board and a very good director. I learned a lot about what board organization meant. Then I began to be asked to be on other committees and boards and things, and I could contrast the way Lincoln Child Center was run. I learned a lot, and I found that I really liked that kind of thing. I found that I could be useful. I have been on a lot of boards and worked with a lot of committees and along the way, I got into various local political campaigns. For instance, right now I'm working with a woman who is running to be mayor of Oakland, Mary King. She's currently on the board of supervisors, and wants to be mayor of Oakland. I think she's a very good person. I'm on her steering committee. I'm sort of an advisor, working to help her get elected. Nine people are running, so it's sort of a big deal.

LaBerge: Before we leave the Lincoln Center, can you tell me something about that? Because not everyone knows what they do.

Jurs: Yes. It's been operating a long time. It's an agency to help children with emotional problems. I think that perhaps more children have much more serious emotional problems than they did then. That service then led to the Alameda County Mental Health Association; I was on the board. They had three vice presidents and I held all of those positions. I still get on various ad hoc committees from time to time. It's been a long-term interest.

I worked mostly, at first, on children's issues. I had children, you see, and that was what I was involved in, all kinds of children's services: things like adoption, although that didn't affect us. But still, I got interested in services affecting children.

White House Conference on Children, 1970

LaBerge: Tell me about the adoption. Was it the Children's Home Society, or Center?

Jurs: I wasn't on any board. I joined the Children's Lobby, for instance, which is a statewide organization. I am a Democrat, and was not very much for Reagan, so I thought it was very funny that I became Reagan's delegate, or one of his delegates, to the White House Conference on Children.

LaBerge: Really?

Jurs: That was in--oh, 1970 is in my head.

LaBerge: Tell me a little bit about that.

Jurs: It was interesting. I liked it, but I was very struck, I was astounded by some things. For instance, we each had to introduce ourselves. We were each assigned to a section, but one could also choose what you worked on. But the reason that I was shocked was this. The men delegates would say, in introducing themselves, "I am John Jones and I work for such-and-such an organization, and I am very interested in a certain aspect of child care." When it was a woman, even though she had a full-time job, she would say, "I am Betty Smith and I have a husband and four children," and then tell about her work. The men didn't talk about that at all, unless it came up in the conversation. Women, almost all, defined themselves this way.

LaBerge: Men didn't say, "I'm a father"?

Jurs: No, they didn't say, "I'm a father." I suspect that's still true. The difference between men, a man's role and a woman's role, even in the volunteer arena was striking. Most of the delegates were not volunteers. I guess some of them were, but many of them headed an agency. There were a lot of things like that that quite surprised me. I think California was somewhat ahead of some of the rest of the country in ways like that.

LaBerge: How many people came to the conference?

Jurs: Oh, I don't know, several hundred. I can't even remember. I chucked all my papers about it. I'm not a keeper, so I don't really know.

LaBerge: Was it held in Washington?

Jurs: It was held in Washington. And it had speakers. We were supposed to be making suggestions as to good child care, what child care was needed or what services were needed. It was interesting, very interesting. I don't know how many people were there but they came from all over the country, every ten years, I think.

LaBerge: Okay. And each governor, I take it, appointed a certain number.

Jurs: Yes. Several. I've been kind of choosy about the boards I work with. I'm still choosy. I was asked this week to head up a big committee, and I turned it down because it just didn't interest me. You have to be turned on by the work that is being done.

LaBerge: That's right. Or else you can't interest other people.

Jurs: No. Plenty of things turn me on still.

ACLU and Diversity

Jurs: I know that the emphasis changed of what I worked on. I began to work to try to get minorities to serve on various boards. I joined the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] years and years ago. I was on that board for a while. But it was children's services and education that I got mostly involved in. I was also interested in legislation to help us move in the right direction, what at least seemed to be the right direction. I was originally rather more liberal than most of the people who lived near us. We belonged and still do to the Claremont Country Club, a very nice club, but in those days, it seemed to me very conservative. It still does.

LaBerge: How did you deal with that? Coming up against people who did not agree with you?

Jurs: Well, I think we're all entitled to our opinions. I remember once we went to a wedding reception at the Claremont Country Club. Gene played golf there, but I had never used it very much. But we went to an anniversary party there, and I sat at a table next to a man I'd never met before. This may have been during the Reagan days, or along about then. Anyway, he said, "Tell me about you," because I had asked him a lot of questions, and found out that he was exceedingly conservative. He was making conversation. We went through, "Have you been on a trip lately, do you play golf," that kind of thing.

And then one of us said something about the current campaign, which I think involved Reagan. I told him whom I was supporting. I can't think if it was Reagan or what, but I was obviously supporting the wrong side as far as he was concerned. And there was quite a dead silence. Then finally he said, "You don't look a bit like a Democrat." I was surprised. I said,

"Well, some of us get our hair fixed now and then." I don't think he knew any Democrats, and he thought of them as--

LaBerge: Hippies?

Jurs: Hippie types. I wanted him to know that although I was another liberal, that I did like to have my hair cut now and then and had many of the same values as he did, and wanted to live in a nice neighborhood.

Choosing Oakland High Schools

Jurs: Also, along the way, when Karen got ready to go to high school--

LaBerge: Oh yes, I wanted you to tell this story, because you told me before, just in conversation.

Jurs: Oh, it was funny. Our house is close to the Piedmont line and children from this area could then go to Piedmont High, if Piedmont High wasn't full. Everybody almost routinely thought that, of course, we'd choose Piedmont High. The Oakland schools were packed, but she could choose between Oakland High and Oakland Tech[nical] High. We thought it was better, more like the real world, so we chose Oakland High for Karen over Piedmont.

Karen's always been very glad she went there. Of course, schools were not as violent then as they appear to be now. Some of my daughters have said it's hard to send your kid to public school these days because they're afraid to go to the bathroom. I don't know if I had children now what we would do. But at that time, we thought it was much better. Skyline [High School] had not been built yet. Karen is glad that she went to Oakland High.

I thought Piedmont was too segregated. We wanted our children to know about the real world. Some of our neighbors thought that we were very strange. How could we do that to our children, they wondered.

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LaBerge: You were saying that Karen was accepted at Stanford, so it certainly didn't hurt her.

Jurs: No, not as far as her school records were concerned. She chose not to go to Stanford. She had good grades. I think she learned a lot about the real world. By the time Christy and Cynthia came

along, Skyline had been built so naturally they went to Skyline. Pete Jurs, Gene's twin, was on the Oakland School Board at the time plans were being made for the new school. I thought then they made a bad mistake because they put it in not nearly as settled an area, but it was bound to be rather affluent. I thought they had made a bad mistake, but, of course, that was the direction that the population was moving so there were reasonable reasons for it.

LaBerge: So your other children went to Skyline?

Jurs: Yes. In a certain way, I've been a little out of step with most people around here, but I have many, many good friends. I don't happen to be drawn to the people who are super conservative. I didn't really need to have a job, but I got a lot out of my system by choosing my own jobs.

LaBerge: And it worked in with your life with your children, because you could--

Jurs: Yes. I could be at home. Our children were very important to us and I spent a lot of time with them. I did a lot with them. They're all creative. All of them painted and drew, and made things. I thought that was important. So I spent a lot of time and energy thinking of ways to make their life interesting. I took them to a lot of art exhibits when they were small. We took them all over. Their education and what was happening to them was always very important to both of us.

Oakland Voting Patterns and Precinct Walking

Jurs: I got into things besides children's services. I got into voting patterns and I walked precincts for many people.

LaBerge: This is for the city of Oakland?

Jurs: Yes. People have tried to get me to do things on a wider range, but I like local things better.

LaBerge: Was this in conjunction with the League of Women Voters or just on your own?

Jurs: No, that was on my own. But at one time I was asked to be on the board of the League of Women Voters. I accepted. I had been active in the league but hadn't been on the board. Then an election was coming up very shortly, and you couldn't be on the

board and be active in a candidate's campaign, because the league doesn't ever take sides about people. They study issues and after study may take a side. I just barely got on the board and then resigned. I found that to me it was more important to work for a certain candidate. I continued to be somewhat active in the league but I haven't been active there for a long time. I just got too busy. I continue to belong and I read all their literature and sometimes go to their informational sessions.

LaBerge: What were some of the issues that you worked on, either through that or in Oakland?

Jurs: Mostly it was supporting people that I thought would be good candidates to be mayor or to be on the school board. [They were] usually rather liberal, and often blacks. I thought it was very important that people recognize that many blacks were very, very capable. Of course, now it's happened. I read somewhere rather lately, and I thought this was very interesting, that Oakland has more blacks in middle management jobs than any other city of its size. You know, there are a lot of blacks who are college-educated and have very responsible jobs with corporations, but that was not true earlier. They really have made some progress.

LaBerge: Tell me about different mayors in Oakland that you've worked with or you've admired. I don't know who was before Lionel Wilson.

Jurs: I didn't work for Lionel Wilson, although he lives right down the street from us here. I voted for him, but I usually voted for whoever seemed to be the most willing to make changes. Gene is only rather recently a Democrat. He'd been a Republican; he's always been more conservative than I. Under Republican mayors, he was appointed to several committees and he's been on several commissions. We've lately had Democratic mayors, so he never gets appointed to those things any more. I really haven't worked for any of them. I mostly worked to get them elected.

LaBerge: Did you ever think of running for the school board?

Jurs: A lot of people used to ask me to, but that isn't really my cup of tea. I and another woman once founded a group to press for better candidates for the school board. For the several years that this group existed, we asked every candidate for the school board to come at a certain time, every half hour, to tell this group what they stood for and to answer questions. They were supposed to talk to us for a half an hour, forty-five minutes. We were mainly Montclair people, but also a mixture of West Oakland people too, and certainly a mixture of Republicans and Democrats. We had encouraged them all, then decided which one we should support. Then we had a fundraiser or two and donated

money to their campaign. It was a pretty good idea. People who hadn't voted for the one we decided to support dropped out until the next time. [tape interruption]

We always held these sessions at my house. We have a small recreation building, separate from the main house. We can have an audience there of about sixty people. There is a bathroom and running water and, fortunately, no telephone.

That only lasted for two or three years, but I thought it was really a good system. I can't remember exactly why it fell apart. Maybe it lasted three or four years but not very long. And then it just fell apart.

LaBerge: Did both you and your husband organize it together?

Jurs: No, it was just for women. It was always during the day. Some women didn't work in that era and many of the candidates were men, of course. It started off with school board campaigns. Certain things have a life of their own and sometimes the people that are especially interested turn to other activities, and things don't last.

Fair Housing

LaBerge: That's right, or there's an issue. I was thinking, I know that in the middle sixties there was a fair housing issue in Berkeley, for instance. Did you get involved in that?

Jurs: Well, no, because we're in Oakland, but I felt very strongly. That was early. I remember I passed out a lot of literature about fair housing in Oakland, standing on a corner somewhere and sometimes people spat on me. We did get involved. At the time we bought this lot there weren't very many houses here at all, and we signed the--whatever they called--

LaBerge: A covenant or something?

Jurs: Yes, and without even thinking about it. People just didn't think about it. One thing ours said was there should be no billboards. We didn't want billboards either; we wanted to keep this a residential area. It also said that all lots had to be of a certain size and that you couldn't sell to Chinese. That was before the war.

LaBerge: Wow!

Jurs: We didn't even think. We were dumb, but we were young and newly married. We just signed it without thinking.

LaBerge: Was it only Chinese, or Japanese?

Jurs: Chinese.

LaBerge: Not Japanese?

Jurs: No. It didn't mention the Japanese. It was during the days that [William Randolph] Hearst was talking about the "yellow peril" and all of that. That was before the influx of blacks at the time of the war. They came to work in shipyards. There weren't very many blacks around here yet, and so it was the "yellow peril" that was the danger. The longtime African-American families here had come originally as employees of the railroads, often as Pullman porters.

And then what else? No one could keep goats. Looking back on that, it was terrible. You couldn't keep goats, and you couldn't sell to a Chinese. Imagine, putting all that together.

Then some people woke up and realized what we and all our neighbors had done. I remember we went--Gene became active in the local homeowners organization around here and we went to talk about changing those rules. Gene was a Republican and a businessman, and he's always been extremely fair. Shand and Jurs was really admired by many for their fairness. Profit sharing with their workers was part of it. They all got bonuses in a good year. If they had a good year, they shared with their workers. I always admired that.

Gene was essentially a conservative, but I was so proud of him. We were in our twenties, and we went to a big meeting about changing the rules. They were talking about keeping the values of the property and how important that was. But they began talking about the human element, and Gene got up and made a good short speech about our fellow man. I've forgotten exactly what he said, but I was very proud of him.

A nice woman who was very active in Children's Hospital and whose husband was a very respected businessman around here got up and said, "Mr. Jurs is very young. It's nice to see his enthusiasm but he doesn't understand about property values." It was a different era. I was very proud of him. We haven't always agreed about issues nor voted alike. It's always been interesting because we get all the literature from both sides.

Our children said when they were much younger that they grew up in a two-party household; they knew all about the two-party system. I always thought it was fine, and he always did too. We've had a very good and close marriage, with a lot of political disagreement but I think it's silly when people say you have to agree with each other about everything. I think no two people ever do agree about things, and that it's much more interesting to have discussion about the issues.

Changing Times

LaBerge: And actually a much wider view for children then.

Jurs: It is a very different era, though. I mean, some of the things that we take for granted now--some of the people belonging to the Claremont Country Club perhaps still don't take it for granted. Piedmont is changing. My daughter Emily lives on Ashmount, here in Oakland. Many of her friends live over the line in Piedmont. She had a little group to lunch one day about a year ago, and she asked me to come. I was very interested in them. They began talking about how Piedmont had changed. They wanted to move to Piedmont because the schools were good and because the houses were nice and because the property values were up, all the reasons why people buy whatever they can afford in a good place.

But they talked about how the city council had become predominately Democrat. They are people mostly your age, I suppose, living there now. Older people, the very conservative ones, are dying off and it's not predominately conservative anymore, according to them. I was astonished.

LaBerge: I was shocked, too, to hear about the Claremont Country Club. Someone told me he could never join because he was Jewish. I don't know if that's still true.

Jurs: I think they have a few Jewish members. I tried to get Gene to resign a long time ago because they didn't have any blacks or any Chinese or probably no Jews. I felt that was terrible. He wouldn't resign. He said that's not the way you do it. He was on the Oakland Redevelopment Agency at that time; in fact, that's when he was the chairman. He was a member for ten or twelve years, I think.

John Williams was the director of the Redevelopment Agency, and a black. He came from Cleveland, was college-educated, with a very interesting wife. She had gone to college, her parents

had gone to college, and her grandparents had gone to college. Her grandfather was the president of a small black college in the South. Gene played golf with John Williams a lot and he told me that the way to do it was not to resign but to invite John Williams and some of John's friends and some of the blacks that we knew to play golf at the country club. "You know what would happen if we resigned. That might make a small stir. People would say, 'What in the world are the Jurs thinking of?' But nothing would really change."

He did invite African Americans to play golf and have lunch. That was in the days when it wasn't exactly easy. I remember that he made a point of getting his friends to sit with them, people that he knew would be pleasant. So you see, it was a different day, and some progress has been made.

I would have resigned and would have tried to make something of a fuss of it. Gene doesn't operate that way. He may have been right. I just thought, Well, I don't use the country club much anyway. I belong to the Lakeview Club. We have his/her clubs because Lakeview was a handy place for me to meet business people and people who worked downtown. We don't use it for much of anything else. So that membership is in my name. It's really Gene who belongs to Claremont. We go there occasionally for supper. There are some very, very nice people there and I don't want to paint everybody with a bad brush.

LaBerge: Talking about the Oakland Redevelopment Agency, did you also know Charles Patterson?¹

Jurs: Yes. I knew his widow [Dorothy Patterson], too. How did I meet her?

LaBerge: I think she was active in the Oakland public schools.

Jurs: Yes.

LaBerge: She was a teacher?

Jurs: Oh yes, she was. She was a nurse. Later she started a remarkable program in the high schools where children could get sex education.

¹See Charles J. Patterson, "Working for Civic Unity in Government, Business, and Philanthropy," an oral history conducted in 1991 by Gabrielle Morris, Regional Oral History Office, University of California, Berkeley, 1994.

LaBerge: And working with pregnant teenagers.

Jurs: Yes, and giving out information so they didn't have to get pregnant again. I always thought it was remarkable that she could put that across. I know her better than I knew him. Both were very likable. He had been working with the Peace Corps; I think he was a regional head. She is currently a member of the board of the East Bay Community Foundation. I am a member of an advisory committee.

LaBerge: The only way I knew about them is that our office interviewed him.

Jurs: He recently died. She also would be wonderful to interview.

LaBerge: That's a good idea.

Jurs: Sex education and how she was able to get it through the school system, I just do not understand; it's because she's a thoroughly nice woman who didn't press it too hard, I think. I've always respected her. Now how did I get acquainted with her? We worked on something together.

But I think in her own right, she would be a very good person to interview, because she's had Peace Corps experience and the whole black experience, and the nursing career. I hope I get to read it if you should do one.

LaBerge: Yes. You'd find his very interesting, too. He grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana, and he ended up in Cleveland with the Urban League. So I thought he maybe even knew John Williams, or there was some connection.

Jurs: Maybe so. John Williams died. I think it was cancer. His wife was remarried and lived for a time in Ohio but that marriage fell apart and she now lives in Oakland. One of her four daughters recently became a member of the board of Oakland Potluck.

Oakland Public School Volunteers and Resource Program

LaBerge: Well, let's go back to the beginning when you first started volunteering.

Jurs: Oh, all right.

LaBerge: How did you organize the Oakland Public School Volunteers?

Jurs: People thought then that volunteers didn't belong in the schools and the schools thought that teachers were trained to teach and that volunteers should stay out of it. That was when my children were first starting school. I didn't think that was true. Berkeley had developed a thriving volunteer program and some Berkeley friends of mine had told me about it. I thought Oakland should have a similar program. The volunteer program over in Berkeley was called the School Resource program.

I found myself saying to all kinds of people that Oakland ought to start such a program, but nobody did anything about it. I didn't know how to do it either. I didn't know any of the school board people then either. I hadn't been around very much. But I made an appointment to see a member of the school board and I talked to her about it. She said I should see the superintendent, which I had tried earlier to do. That was Stuart Phillips. He was superintendent for a long time, at the time my children started school. Anyway, I knew there were a lot of people with time who had maybe been teachers--or could help. There were all kinds of people who could help in the schools.

So I finally reached Stuart Phillips. He thought it was a good idea but it took a full year before anything happened at all, and I gave up. I thought nobody was going to want to do anything. I prodded and nothing happened. Then all at once, they called me up and asked me to a meeting. They'd gathered together a bunch of other people from different areas of interest. The final program was structured rather differently than the one in the Berkeley schools, which was probably the way I would have done it. I think maybe this way was better because it was within the school system.

LaBerge: Rather than the individual schools?

Jurs: Yes. We had clerical help. We formed a board and we had all kinds of ideas.

LaBerge: Who else was on the board with you?

Jurs: Joan Hughes; that's how I got acquainted with her. She's one I've worked with a lot over the years. Who were they? We were just into it. Loni Hart--I can't think right now who else.

LaBerge: You may later on.

Jurs: I may. Anyway, we were very enthusiastic. We became the steering committee. We had secretarial help, we had all kinds of help. And about two years later maybe I got the idea of the School Resource Program, because I kept meeting people who had a

lot of interests and I thought if they could share their experiences with children, it would be good.

The school volunteers bought the idea and I worked hard on it. Every time I would go out for dinner and meet some nice person who was a painter or a psychiatrist or a lawyer or a whatever, I'd say, "Would you be willing to come occasionally to Oakland schools to share your interest?" One woman who knew all about birds said she'd like to do talks on a regular basis about the beaks and claws of birds. Other people talked about the law or science or medicine or etchings or whatever their interest was.

We had a bulletin where we'd describe what this person could do and when he or she was available. Lawyers would say, "Well, I can't do it more than once a month, but I could come at teacher request on the first Wednesday of the month," or something like that. We'd get out a bulletin at the beginning of each semester listing all these people, so that teachers could read about it, and we would describe what the program was.

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LaBerge: One good idea was--?

Jurs: One good idea was sort of a legal course for kids at the high school, about the kind of law that everybody needs to understand. They were beginning to drive and they needed to know what happened if they got in an accident. Some of them were beginning to father or mother children. They learned about laws governing all the kinds of things that they would be involved in, if they weren't already. We got different lawyers to speak. One would take one aspect, and one another, training the students in beginning law for the kinds of things that they were going to need--like laws about driver's licenses or divorce or voting. I thought that it was a very good idea.

This all went very, very well. We filled hundreds of requests. I would go at the beginning of each semester to the meeting that all the teachers went to, a big meeting, and would describe what we had and give them the bulletin. The program was a great success.

Marcus Foster

Jurs: And then Marcus Foster came to Oakland as superintendent of schools. I wrote him a letter, after it was sure that he was to be the superintendent, and told him about the volunteer program and the resource program before he ever got here. He came then knowing about it and feeling already very enthusiastic. Of course, he liked volunteers and volunteerism, so it fitted right in with his ideas and it went well with him.

After Foster was shot and Ruth Love became superintendent, it just all collapsed. Then the school system never had any money and a lot of good volunteers left. Nobody was using them and a very good program went down the drain.

LaBerge: Had you stopped being involved by that time too?

Jurs: I was not as much involved. Some of my children were out of Oakland schools. Cynthia was still around but the schools were in such a sad state and have been ever since. They just couldn't assimilate the program. We had to have secretarial help from the school department.

LaBerge: Is that how it was supplied, the schools' actual secretaries who did the--?

Jurs: No, it was the school administration downtown. The volunteer tutors in those days didn't work in schools where their children were. I couldn't have worked in the Montclair school at all, because the thought was that parents are apt to interfere. People don't think that any more but that was the way it was then. It was better to tutor somebody else's child and not to have anything to do with your own child's class.

But it was a very good program. And Marcus Foster bought into it enthusiastically. It was an awful day when he was shot. He was a hero of mine. I respected him enormously. He was a wonderful man.

LaBerge: How long was he superintendent?

Jurs: I think about three years. Things were going very well. He had put together a citywide task force; I was part of it, a series of task forces to suggest things for the schools. He involved almost everybody in the city who wanted to work in this way, in this gigantic meeting. People were so interested. They had their sleeves rolled up and they just wanted to do everything they could to help. It was amazing.

And of course, that all passed on to Ruth Love. Although she talked a volunteer approach, she didn't really believe in it, I think, the way that Foster did; she had a different agenda.

Placing Volunteers

LaBerge: Tell me a little about the tutors. Did that go along with the resource program or was it the Oakland Public School volunteers?

Jurs: No, that was the Oakland Public School volunteers. The School Resource Program was a branch of the Oakland school volunteer program.

LaBerge: Did someone, for instance, call you and say, "I could tutor in math"? Or, "I'd just tutor in anything"?

Jurs: What we did was refer them to Loni Hart, who interviewed them. If you'd said you'd like to volunteer, they'd say, "Well, not in Montclair," if that's where you lived. But were you willing to go anywhere? Yes, and your field was whatever--that you'd like to work with third graders, or whatever. Then they'd place you. Loni Hart did that as a volunteer. She'd had experience along this line and she had a lot of clerical help. She had an office and everything.

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Jurs: As far as the volunteers were concerned, we had to fit into the district as was done in Berkeley. That was just a separate organization feeding the schools--

LaBerge: That would be a lot easier.

Jurs: No, in one way it wasn't. You see, I had all this clerical help, and people to call. Like if you'd say, "Yes, I'll come every Tuesday to the schools," somebody had to call you and a lot of other people. We had all that help. The human resource department, or whatever they called it in the schools, then had twenty-five people working for it. The last I heard, it had three and they were letting two of them go. We had the help of that department. They don't have the manpower or the money now. I had secretarial help, as I said; I had a volunteer who came to my house, too. I had a woman down there in the district office who'd type up stuff that I needed done, or that we all needed, Loni Hart and others. That was quite different. With Potluck, it all depended on us.



Oakland Mayor John Reading presenting Florence Jurs with National Volunteer Citation, December 14, 1972.

But I suppose there are certain rules about all of them. First, consider what the difficulties might be. You always have to do that. And are we going to be able to get people to help us, and are others enthusiastic about it and all of that kind of thing.

I guess if I were starting a new group now, I'd start off about that same way, probably, calling--

LaBerge: Calling a small group together?

Jurs: To discuss it, people who had been volunteers of one sort or another, and had strong feelings about it, probably people that I'd worked with in different contexts. Because sometimes when somebody says, "Have you ever thought of such-and-such," it's better to have a lot of minds working on it.

It's fun, though. You get feeling, oh my gosh, this is really going to work.

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Jurs: I eventually moved over into the resource program, and that went very well. I liked the variety of the people working on it. It's so interesting to meet somebody and think, I wonder if she'd be willing to help. You'd find that yes, she'd been, or was, a teacher or was an artist or a scientist. You can turn people on if you're enthusiastic. I really worked hard on that.

I did an enormous amount of work. I lined up many of the people to come into the schools. I spent a lot of time on the phone and it was very interesting. I did have a volunteer secretary and I had clerical help through the district office, which was wonderful. So yes, I worked hard on that for several years.

But in the meantime, I was on Lincoln Child Center's board, and other boards as well. I've been on so many boards, I can't even remember just what they were.

Volunteers and Oakland Potluck

LaBerge: How did you juggle all the things that you were doing?

Jurs: I had, of course, four children. I was really a mother who wanted to be at home. I did have day help, I had a cleaning woman, and when Cynthia was small I had sitters. I tried to be home with them, but once they were in school, I had more time. I

started out being a Girl Scout leader. When one of our girls became a Brownie, I did that. So I participated in all that kind of thing, enthusiastically. If you have three or four children, there's an awful lot of driving them to classes, taking them to ballet, and all of that kind of thing. I worked during the hours that they were in school, or sometimes at night.

Many people really like to volunteer, I certainly discovered that with Oakland Potluck, by the time I got to that. For instance, I wished so hard that I had a secretary because there began to be a lot of letter writing and clerical responsibilities. A woman who had read about Potluck in the paper called to say that she wanted to help. The trouble was, she didn't have any talents, she said. I said, "Tell me about yourself and what you do." She said, "The only thing that I know how to do is how to be a secretary. I have been a private secretary at Cal for most of my adult life." So I said, "You're an answer to a prayer." It turned out she was a fine secretary.

LaBerge: What's her name?

Jurs: Beverly Shaw. I thought that was wonderful. I got so I could dictate to her over the phone. She lived not too far away and her health wasn't good by that time so she was at home a lot. She could take shorthand so I could just dictate to her over the phone. At first, I would go over to her house and read the letter. There were never any errors, and it looked perfect. So I had her sign my name and mail letters without my seeing them all. It was absolutely wonderful.

Another time--(this was also about Potluck)--Gene had been helping me by driving to pick up food. We had a group of people who picked up donated food and delivered to our food servers. It was turning out to be quite a chore. A man called me because he had read about Potluck and he said he'd like to help. He said, "How come I haven't heard anything about Potluck?" I said, "Maybe you haven't been very well informed. It's been around for a year or two." So he became our main driver. He's still doing it. We were later given a van, which he kept at his house. He had taken early retirement so he had time to work with us.

LaBerge: I've seen the van. What's his name?

Jurs: Dal Sellman. You might like to talk to him, he's listed in the telephone book. He still works for Potluck. He's limited his time more and he has more helpers now. Then he would drive anytime, even at night. If someone would call at eleven o'clock at night and say, "I have food left over," he'd say, "I'll be right over." He's a very, very nice and very helpful man. He

had a very great deal to do with how Potluck developed and he is still working with Potluck.

Importance of Turnover on Boards

Jurs: I have a strong feeling that many people stay too long with an organization, especially if they are founders. It becomes like your child and it is difficult to turn the organization over to other people. One time when I worked for the Management Center I was asked to help a small performing arts organization. They were having trouble getting people to serve on the board. We thought they needed help with board development. So I went to talk to them.

It turned out that the group had been founded thirty years before and all the original board members were still members of the board, most of them having been on the board for thirty years. When a new person joined the board and said to the group, "Why don't we do it this way?" they'd answer, "Oh, no, we can't do that, we've always done it this way." New people never wanted to stay on the board and there were no new creative ideas.

I tried to get them to set and enforce term limits. I think there has to be a turnover. When it came to Potluck, I said, "I'm going to work with it for five or six years and then even if it's a wrench, I'm not going to stay any longer." It was a wrench, because it had been such a large part of what I'd been doing. I missed it but I still think it's better to leave. It's better to have new people with new ideas.

So I've always done that: I've stayed a certain length of time and then made myself move on because it's much better for the organization. There are people who hold on to their children and that's not good for the child or for the parents. Things have to change. You bring up your children in the best way you know how and then let them go. Something like that happened with Potluck. I think that I've made that a tenet in my volunteer life--work hard with an organization and then move on.

LaBerge: Did you realize that early on?

Jurs: I knew it but I didn't know it very well.

LaBerge: Maybe you couldn't state it, but you knew it within you?

Jurs: I certainly thought that about children, that so many people hang on to, say, a daughter. A family who used to live across the street from us also had four daughters. They had two that came swimming all the time with Cynthia. The other two were older and were married. Once at Christmas time I said to this woman, "What are you going to do for Christmas?" She said, "Everybody's coming to our house." I said, "What about the two that are married? Do you have to share them with the in-laws?" She said, "Oh, no! They have to come to my house, they have to come; they're required." I don't think that's a healthy way to handle a problem.

LaBerge: Right.

Jurs: Emily's husband comes from around here. We've always felt sorry that every other year they would have Christmas with us and Christmas Eve with the other family; they'd have to divide it up. But that seems to me a good way to handle the problem.

LaBerge: Also I think you mentioned once to me that it keeps you interested if you keep moving on. When you stay with the same volunteer group, you'd get a little stale and not like it any more.

Jurs: Yes. I find I need change and stimulation. Suddenly I get an idea about something and then I'm turned on. I just can't see how anybody can work with, say, a music group for thirty years; I just can't. It's not healthy for that person either, because you just get stuck in your ways, it seems to me. Change is part of life, I think.

Certainly I need change. I'm one who likes meeting different people, I like variety. I like finding different interests. So I did move on as the children grew up. I think it's been a plus for me, because I've learned a lot. If I'd stayed with one or two organizations all this time, I wouldn't have had as good a time.

Salaried Work vs. Volunteer Work

LaBerge: Where did the motivation come from to volunteer?

Jurs: I used to say I was a frustrated career person. Gene had a good job. He became a partner at Shand and Jurs along with his brothers. Women didn't work as much in that era. My mother always had worked and I had expected to, but it didn't quite fit

in. I was offered along the way a couple of small jobs in conjunction with volunteerism. But one time I did talk to Gene about a job in the Oakland school system and he said, "The trouble is, what would you do about vacations?" They wouldn't come at the same time he would be taking his.

My sister is an anthropologist so she has worked all her life. She's mostly doing research work. Her way is more the way our mother managed. My mother had a secretary from the time I was three until I was an adult. She was a writer, she was a book critic, she wrote a column for the paper, she contributed work to a magazine.

LaBerge: That must have had some effect on you, too.

Jurs: Yes, I think it did. Am I digressing too much?

LaBerge: No, not at all. For one thing, lots of little things come in, that won't come in anyway. I had asked you where the motivation came from to be a volunteer, and you were saying you had that example of your mother.

Jurs: But not as a volunteer.

LaBerge: But you were a frustrated career person, maybe.

Jurs: Yes, I was.

LaBerge: But there must be something else, though, that would motivate you.

Jurs: Well, I've always had quite a lot of energy. So many friends have said that they get tired, especially when they have children. I had enough energy, so that I wanted to have my sleeves rolled up and be doing something that was interesting. I like cooking and I'm a housewife type, but I don't want to do that full time. I was always so busy that I'd cook at odd times. We had a lot of company, always, but I'd freeze things I liked, bouncing several balls in the air at a time. I like it much better than leading a very quiet life.

Philosophy on Religion

LaBerge: Did you have any kind of religious background?

Jurs: No, very little. My father would sometimes say he was an atheist and sometimes he'd say he was an agnostic. The idea was that if we wanted a religion we would choose it for ourselves. They didn't send us to Sunday school or to church. When they were first married my mother taught Sunday school for a while. Her grandfather had been a minister and everybody was brought up to go to Sunday school and church. She taught Sunday school but she basically agreed with him, or at least she came to agree with him. She didn't teach Sunday school any time I could remember. She told me about it. Perhaps it was when I was a baby.

LaBerge: What denomination was this?

Jurs: It was a Protestant church. Her grandfather was a Methodist minister. We didn't go to Sunday school at all, ever. Gene was brought up as a Christian Scientist. His mother was a Christian Scientist but not his father.

Gene's twin was in graduate school working on a Ph.D. in chemistry at Stanford. His brother, Al, was at Stanford, too, when I was there and then he went on to Cal Tech.

LaBerge: What was his name?

Jurs: Al, Albert Junior. He was in a very bad automobile accident when I was at Stanford. By that time, I had gone out with Gene a little bit. That was the summer before my senior year. We weren't engaged or anything. Al came to Des Moines on his way across the country and stayed a day or two at our house. I knew him very well, because he was at Stanford with me and going out with a friend of mine.

Anyway, he was in a bad automobile accident. He had a terrible time. The doctors sewed him up at the Stanford Hospital. The accident had happened in North Dakota but they brought him here.

Gene's father was not a Christian Scientist. He wanted him to have the best medical care and Gene's mother agreed; but when the doctors said they could do little for him, and he probably wouldn't live very long, she wanted him to try Christian Science. Al lived thirty or forty years after that.

LaBerge: Oh, my goodness.

Jurs: He did have periodic convulsions. They would come in groups. He couldn't drive after a while. Now that I think about it, eight or ten years went by with no convulsions, I believe. It was because of pressure on the brain. He worked, was a partner at

Shand and Jurs. He couldn't drive. He had a motorscooter. He lived at least thirty years. He's been dead about ten years, I guess. But he lived a long, productive life, fathering six children.

LaBerge: You never went to church or anything as a child?

Jurs: No, I never have. When we went abroad, we'd go visit cathedrals and churches, just as tourists. But no, we didn't. So I wondered how it was going to be for our children. I remember Karen, our first child, tried several churches. She joined a lot of youth groups. She read her way through the Bible, which we didn't do. We had a Bible, but it just wasn't part of our lives. I thought it was splendid that she did that. I am a reader, so I really know more about the Bible than Gene does.

But I wondered how it was going to be for our children. Karen, who was fifteen when Cynthia was born, was so cute. She came to me and she said, "I want to talk seriously to you, Mother." I said, "What about?" She said, "Now you have another chance. I think you should, when Cynthia gets bigger, start her in a Sunday school."

She asked why we didn't, because all her friends went to Sunday school. I said, "Gene was brought up a Christian Scientist and anyway we thought it was a good thing for you to make up your own mind." She took this very seriously. I didn't know how she felt until several years ago, a lot of years later. She said that had made an impression on her. She thought that was fine.

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LaBerge: But it also gave them an opportunity to make their own choices.

Jurs: Yes, yes. Karen has married a man who is Jewish, and they've done just the way we did. They wanted their children to know about Judaism but they didn't make them go to services. I had said to Karen that we couldn't ask her to do something that we ourselves didn't believe in, and since we had no church connection, we wouldn't feel right about making her go. If she had strong feelings about it, she could do what she liked.

When I was thirteen and Mickie was twelve, we had gone to camp in New Hampshire for two months for three summers in a row. People in the East and the Midwest went to camps like that. Now it's usually just a two week session instead of two months.

LaBerge: Yes, that's right.

Jurs: But this was two months, in a lovely place in New Hampshire. It was quite churchly. One of the counselors, a man, was a minister the rest of the time. This was his vacation and also his volunteer job. He conducted a regular Sunday school. I learned, during those several summers, hymns and different things that I had never known at all. I think that if I were doing it again, I would want to take comparative religion courses while I was in college, but I was trying to finish--and did--in three years. So I never could fit it in. I should have done that later but I never did.

My father was a very moral man. Very ethical. He had strong feelings, strong, strong, feelings, but they just weren't of a religious bent at all. Right and wrong were very important, and he cared deeply about the kinds of things that I've been talking about. About giving blacks a chance and civil liberties and all of that kind of thing, and my mother did too. But it was totally removed from religion.

Gene's twin, Pete, said once that he didn't understand how a very moral, ethical person could not be religious at all. I'm surprised, looking back on it, that he said that, because he wasn't very religious either. I don't think Pete sent their children to Sunday school or church either.

LaBerge: I asked because so many people who do good things in the community are motivated by a religious background or something.

Jurs: Not for us. In fact, I think the feeling of wanting to help doesn't come from religion, it just comes from something else. I don't know what it comes from.

LaBerge: Well, it certainly comes from within you, rather than from something imposed.

Jurs: Yes. I think lots of people who belong to the church follow the church precepts, but it isn't really very meaningful to them. We cared a lot about what was right and wrong when we were bringing up our children, but it was totally separate from religion.

VII OAKLAND POTLUCK, 1986 TO 1994

Technical Aspects of Beginning Oakland Potluck

Jurs: When we started Potluck we had to obtain an IRS [Internal Revenue Service] nonprofit status. I didn't know how to do it, but you do it and then you find out how. Then you have to find out whether there's a name--you decide on Oakland Potluck, and then you want to be sure there's not an Oakland Potluck already. You have to research that.

LaBerge: Is that through the Patent Office, or what's that through?

Jurs: That's through a city office. That was downtown, at city hall.

LaBerge: But would it be nationwide that you could use that name, or just in the city?

Jurs: Just in the city, or in the East Bay. Then how you pull people together to decide they want to work with you. What I did usually was to discuss plans with a group of smart people. With Potluck I asked, "Do you think it's a feasible idea and would you be interested in being part of it? How do you think we ought to proceed and what do you see as problems? What do you see as strengths?" Nearly all of them wanted to work with me. Then along the way I asked different people to join us. We didn't have a real board, but we were meeting regularly.

I asked an insurance man to come to discuss with us if we needed insurance. We decided we did not. It's very expensive for a nonprofit organization. We decided that each of us was covered through our household insurance. I wanted an insurance man and also a lawyer to talk to us about what the pitfalls were. We discussed it at length and one man who is a judge, who'd come briefly to some of the meetings, said, "I think it's very

dangerous. You're going to be sued. Somebody's going to get sick from donated food."

I said, "I'm going to go ahead with this anyway, even if you think that's true. I've consulted a lot of people and we have our own insurance, and my husband is with me, so I'm going to go ahead anyway. If any of you that feel that you want to back out, that's fine, I will understand perfectly." Every one of them, except the judge, who wasn't planning to be with us anyway, decided that they would work with us. They were enthusiastic and they thought there was a need for Potluck. We'd be careful.

Origins of Idea: Anniversary Party at the Lakeview Club

[Interview 3: May 27, 1994] ##

LaBerge: We sort of generally covered Potluck, but I thought we'd go into depth today. Why don't you tell me where you got the idea from?

Jurs: All right; it sort of evolved. I hadn't ever done anything in either the hunger or the homeless area. Of course, there were just beginning to be homeless people all around us and all of us were worried about that. Gene and I had our fiftieth wedding anniversary celebration at the Lakeview Club. We now belong but we didn't then. We had a very nice party. We were limited to 200 people and that's what we had. All our children and grandchildren came and so did many friends. It was a very good event.

There was a lot of food left over, which the club offered to us. Of course, it really belongs to the host and hostess if they've ordered it. I simply couldn't use it, because all these people were in town, and there were lots of things going on. So I couldn't use it and I turned it down that night.

Then I went home and I thought, "I wonder what they'll do with all that food," because they have parties there constantly, sometimes two or three a night, and lunch as well. I then had the same woman who still cleans for us once a week and who is a Seventh Day Adventist, and a black, a very nice, smart, respectable person. She had told me for some time about how her church group feeds the hungry in Jefferson Park in downtown Oakland. They do it on Sunday. Their Sabbath is Saturday so they're free on Sunday.

She and most of her friends are on small budgets, but they cook up big pots of beans, rice, inexpensive and filling things. She is a vegetarian, so there was no meat. Anyway, she had told me, laughingly, one time that when the homeless in the park see her group coming, they want the food, but they kid about how they won't get any meat that day.

LaBerge: Are all Seventh Day Adventists vegetarian?

Jurs: I'm not sure but she certainly is. When she joined the church, which was before she came to work for us, about ten or fifteen years ago, I guess, she decided to be a vegetarian. I don't know whether that is a church requirement. She doesn't mind serving meat to other people; she just doesn't want to eat it herself.

I wondered if her group could use the food. I wondered what they'd think if I'd accepted those leftovers and passed them on to her. When she came next, I asked her if she could use leftovers like that. She just fell apart. She thought it would be wonderful because they never really had enough. There are many people feeding others now in Jefferson Park. I think that their group were among the first.

It really was, I found, the black churches which started feeding the hungry people before anybody else did. Anyway, I pondered about that, and then I called the manager of the Lakeview Club, whom I did not know, and made an appointment to meet with him. I said, "What about your leftovers, and what would you think about passing it on to the Seventh Day Adventists?" He said, "Well, let's call in the chef. He's a very public-spirited guy and I think he might be interested."

The chef came in and I told him about this idea. He was thrilled and pleased, so we put our heads together and we talked about what hour would be good so as not to interrupt the kitchen work. The parking is expensive at Kaiser Center and I didn't want the church people to have to pay. We had to plan, too, about containers to hold the food.

I said, "I wonder if I could bring my friend here to meet with you. If she doesn't want to work on this project, we'll find somebody else." Mrs. Allen works at my house on Tuesday; she was very disappointed that I hadn't arranged ahead with her so that so she could dress up. But I said, "It isn't that kind of a meeting." I took her to the Lakeview Club and we met with the chef and we worked out a schedule. She was delighted with the prospect and so was he. That was in 1986. Actually, our anniversary was in 1985, the end of '85, but by the time we got it organized it was 1986.

LaBerge: And you weren't a member yet of the Lakeview Club during all this time?

Jurs: No, I wasn't until a few years later. Mrs. Allen said she had people from her church who could pick up the food at any time. So they were our first clients. It worked out very well. I think we arranged that somebody should pick up food at eleven o'clock one day a week, I think maybe it was on a Monday. I suggested that the kitchen workers put food in disposable carriers. Later we provided them with some containers. That worked out just so beautifully, and I was quite thrilled. We tried the plan for a couple of weeks and she loved it. She said, "Oh, they've just got all kinds of food left over, delicious chicken and cake and things that the homeless don't always get."

Then it happened that a week or so later a friend invited me to what was then called the Oakland Women's Athletic Club, but is now called the Bellevue Club, a very nice, private club down by the lake. I happened to say that I'd just gotten this program started. I said, "I wonder if there are leftovers here." I think they served a Sunday buffet dinner, and they put on parties there too and many members come there for lunch. My friend, who was a member, said, "Oh, let's find out if the same plans would work here. I'll just call the manager over."

She went and got the manager, who came to our table, and I told him what we were doing with the Lakeview Club. He said, "What a splendid idea. Nobody likes to throw food away." So I told him how we'd handled it and we'd find somebody who could pick it up on a regular basis. I think we settled on Monday because of their Sunday buffet meals.

LaBerge: And then would they save the food from the whole week, all the leftovers--?

Jurs: They would save whatever they thought was useful and could be saved. And the Lakeview Club did the same. They did not save all food for a week but they saved what was useful. Of course, the weekends were the times when most food is served.

Checking with the City of Oakland

Jurs: I went home. Now I had two food sources in the space of a week or two. I thought, "This is so easy. There are all kinds of other places that also have food." I'd never been involved in the food business before. I didn't really know what to do. But

I decided I'd better, first of all, go to the public health department and find out what their rules about food care were.

LaBerge: Did any of the people bring that up when you asked about the food?

Jurs: No, at first they didn't. They would now, I think, because everybody has had more experience along those lines. We have always told food donation sources about our rules.

I went to the public health department and carried home a lot of pamphlets telling what was forbidden and what was allowed. I read up on the subject. I thought that hunger and homelessness was beginning to be a citywide problem and I thought the city should be involved. I went to the mayor's office. (I knew the assistant to the then-mayor.)

LaBerge: Who was that?

Jurs: Dave Johnson, who is no longer doing that job. Let me see, which mayor was it? I think it was Lionel Wilson. Dave Johnson thought it was a very good idea and he was very helpful. We discussed the plans and details.

He assigned a very nice young man, an attractive, very intelligent fellow, a black fellow, who would help me in any way I wanted him to. Not for a long period of time and not for many, many hours, but he would give me any help he could. I had decided by then that I needed a list of groups who served food to hungry people. I had gone to the community development office to ask for a list of groups, probably church groups, that were already serving the hungry, thinking I could start with that. It turned out that it was a very sketchy list and many of the groups had done it a long time before and later gone out of business--it wasn't an up-to-date list at all.

I pondered about how to proceed. But I decided, before I gathered my friends together, my acquaintances together, to get something started, that working through the city was not the way I wanted to go. I could see that, of necessity, that if you worked with the Seventh Day Adventist group, then you would have to work with a Catholic group and a Episcopalian group and all the many other church groups. You would also need to balance your aid geographically. That is, giving help in all parts of the city.

I went back to talk to Dave again and he agreed that there were strings on it that would not be there if I just went off on my own. I certainly intended to obey whatever health rules there

were. So I took the rudimentary list of places helping to serve the hungry and thought, "At least I can start with these and I'll just go on from there."

Brainstorming Group

Jurs: I gathered together a bunch of people from many different sources. Because I'd worked with so many organizations, I knew a lot of different kinds of people. I did not know people who worked with food but I asked people who I believed might be interested in working with me.

The first one I interested was Ian Zellick. I thought of him in the beginning. He was community relations director at KTVU and was recently retired. He was already a friend. He had served on many, many boards, and I had served on a good many, too, so our paths had crossed quite often before. He was very helpful. He is very used to working with volunteers and with community people. He and his wife are now among my very best friends.

He joined with me and invited me to meet with a group at KTVU. There are very nice meeting rooms there, and we met there for quite a long time. I gathered the first group together, other volunteer types or business types. I think I had fifteen or twenty people on my list.

LaBerge: Do you remember some of their names?

Jurs: Margaret McKibbon was one. She's the wife of Judge McKibbon and is very active in her own right, active mostly through the museum, and is a very bright woman. Let's see, who else did I invite? If I looked through my files, I would think of their names.

I told them that this was a one-shot deal, that I was not asking them to work with me but I was asking them, from their experience, to give me their views on whether this idea was feasible, how far could it go, how should we handle it? I had a whole series of questions.

LaBerge: How about your friend who had taken you to the Bellevue Club?

Jurs: No, I didn't ask her. These were all people who were "eager beavers." Some of them were business people but interested in volunteerism and were helpful.

We had a very successful meeting and they all thought it was a very good idea. I said that I wanted to form a group, not a board, because I thought we'd see who worked well together and would form the board later. We didn't have IRS nonprofit status yet, which we had to get. You have to have a board then--that's one of the obligations--but that that would come a little further down the road.

We began to meet, and almost all of them stayed interested. Margaret McKibbin did not. She was very busy. She was then president of the Women's Board of the Oakland Museum, a high-powered job. She didn't stay with us, but she remained interested as did many of the others.

Choosing a Name and Writing Bylaws

Jurs: I talked to Ian about names for the organization. You have to have a name and you don't want a conflict. You don't want to have two organizations with the same name. We had a lot of ideas. I happened to think of the name Oakland Potluck which Ian didn't like quite as well as I did. But there were other organizations with the name that he had suggested. We settled on the name Oakland Potluck.

This group began to work together on kind of an informal basis. It wasn't yet a board. I knew Bob Orser of the Management Center very well. I'd worked, half-time, for the Management Center for three or four years. I asked him if he knew somebody who could give me a hand in writing bylaws. He arranged for help for me from a lawyer specializing in work with nonprofit agencies. He produced bylaws that we could later adopt and assisted with the process of obtaining our IRS nonprofit status.

In the meantime, our group continued working together. We formed a board. People suggested others who might be willing to help. Bob Fitzmaurice worked with us from the start. (He is a local businessman whose firm, J.R. Fitzmaurice, is a construction company.) Frits Brevet is an insurance man who also was with us from the beginning. I, early on, had asked Rita Perry to participate because she had much experience in political organization and I thought we might need to lobby for changes in laws governing the donations of food. She and her husband, Lloyd, worked with us and so did Ann Sprague who was active in the union to which non-certificated workers in the schools belonged.

[Jean Gross (Mrs. Dunstan Gross) came on the board quite early and so did my friend Joan Hughes although she was not a member for very long. Mary Perry Smith (Mrs. Norvell Smith), the president of Black Film Makers of America, was on the board for, I think, three two-year terms. Dorothy Gebhard, a retired public school principal, worked with us. Stan Hebert III was then in the advertising business and is now head of a national basketball organization, and has been on the board for a long time and still helps when he can. He is a young black man. Norma Lau, a Chinese American and Oakland city auditor is a board member. Mary Laurence was early on the board as newsletter editor and her husband, Harold Laurence, although not a board member, helped us in many ways. Marge Saunders (Mrs. R.R. Saunders), an active Oakland volunteer, was a board member from the beginning. Ian Zellick and I were both, of course, board members, Ian as our first president and I as coordinator.]¹

Public Health Department and Insurance Question

Jurs: I had heard in the early days of Potluck that Los Angeles had been having a difficult time trying to feed the hungry because the public health rules were very stringent. The public health department was bureaucratic and didn't allow any action that was a little bit different. So I decided that I would stay away from the public health department. I would see to it that we do everything carefully, that we would do nothing wrong, but we would stay away from the public health department.

Later on, after we'd been functioning quite a while, somebody from the public health department called me. I thought, "Here it comes." But I described our operation in detail. We had a list of foods which we would not accept and others which we would accept reluctantly or not take at all. The public health man said that it sounded as if we were doing everything right. He wished us well and we've had no conflict.

But then a lawyer from our group said, "Well, I don't know. I think you people are going to find yourselves sued sometime or you're going to be in deep trouble if you aren't sued." I investigated what it would cost to get insurance and for nonprofit agencies it's very expensive and we had no money. We discussed the issue a number of times, what to do about this, and

¹ This material was added by Mrs. Jurs during the editing process.

I asked an insurance man and another lawyer to come to several meetings to confer with us about this problem.

I talked to my husband about our coverage and all the others went home and looked at their insurance coverage. I said, "I'm going to go on with this but of course none of you need to join me. I think it's going to be all right, and we will continue to be careful." In the meantime, I'd also talked to various local nutritionists and I talked to people at [UC] Davis, which has a very good nutrition department. I talked to the head of that department over the phone about the potential dangers. Anyway, we thought we knew--

LaBerge: You thought you knew the rules.

Jurs: Yes. Frits Brevet, an insurance agent, was helpful and he stayed with us. He was a real help. He picked up food for us. He was an extraordinarily helpful fellow and friend. So he stayed. Nobody melted away in fact. Everybody decided to stay with me. We just would continue to be watchful and careful.

In the meantime we found a name--actually, Ian and I decided on the name. We submitted it to the others and they all thought it was okay.

LaBerge: Before you go on, can you tell me some of the list of foods you'd take reluctantly or no? Would an example be something with mayonnaise that you wouldn't take or something like that?

Jurs: I come from Iowa, and mayonnaise in the hot summer there was very suspect. But around here, our climate is cool enough so there didn't seem to be much worry. The foods we watched were seafood and food that was too old or didn't smell quite right. It's a loose set of rules. Also, we decided not to go very far afield, to collect food only in the East Bay. Our collected food was delivered within half an hour.

In the beginning, we were collecting food but donations were small and we had an informally organized board.

LaBerge: You had the informal board, and then did you apply for nonprofit status?

Jurs: Yes, we did. The lawyer who came to us through Bob Orser helped with that.

LaBerge: Had you ever done that for another group before?

Jurs: No, but I knew something about the process because I'd belonged to a number of groups that were just being formed. I had been one of ten founders of A Central Place which had also started from scratch.

LaBerge: Did you then get into legislation or doing some kind of lobbying with the legislature?

Jurs: Yes, we did. But I really got into that much more later on. I did do quite a bit of lobbying and was prepared to do a lot more when I started Oakland Potluck. We tried to lobby, and it was very difficult. There were pure food laws and rules of the public health department that in some communities of California made it very difficult to start an organization like Potluck. In Los Angeles, for instance, I heard that they had a difficult time because the pure food and public health laws were very strict. I found out what all the rules were. I consulted all sorts of people about how to keep food, what sorts of things we should not do. We certainly obeyed the law, and tried to stay out of their way because I didn't know whether Oakland was going to be like Los Angeles or not. We developed our own guidelines for the kinds of food we did not take. Our rules were rather rigid, about keeping food, about refrigeration.

We had planned to go to Sacramento to lobby and we did do a little lobbying, but it turned out that really wasn't very necessary.

Publicity in the Examiner and The Montclarion##

Jurs: Potluck was going very well and one of the people who had become interested told a woman on the [San Francisco] Examiner about Potluck. That very good reporter did a full page story about Potluck.

LaBerge: I probably read it.

Jurs: There was a picture of me with the chef of the Lakeview Club. I can't remember his name. He moved to another job. He wore his tall chef's hat and he stood with me and with Frances Goodson, a black woman who was the director of a coalition of church groups, Project Safety Net, which served food to many people, some of it donated by the Lakeview Club. The story came out on Sunday and many people read it. People then called me from all sorts of organizations. Publicity is vital for organizations like Potluck.

I knew people at the Montclarion, then a weekly paper which now comes out twice a week. They had carried items about some of my activities in the past before. I called them and they did a number of articles about Potluck. When we began to be better known, I asked if they would be willing to run an ad about Potluck. "It would be wonderful if it could be gratis," I said. They ran our ad periodically, whenever they had space and they still do.

LaBerge: Are Chip and Mary Brown the ones that you talked to?

Jurs: Yes. It was Mary to whom I talked.

My relationship to the Montclarion went way back, ahead of them, because Fred Graeser was the founder and I knew him. My friend, Peggy Stinnett, began to cover the Oakland School Board's activities for the Montclarion. I had children in the schools and was much interested in their doings and I had suggested to Fred that his paper should cover the school board. Peggy's work became widely read. She did the column for, I think, fifteen years.

Later I called Fred Graeser again and said, "Fred, you ought to cover the city council in the same way that you do the school board." He took me up on the idea and asked Peggy to cover the city council as well as the school board. She did for a number of years and then, herself, became a school board candidate. She was selected and was very effective. She now writes a column for the Oakland Tribune. [She will be editor of her section after June 1, 1995.--F.J.]

Now where was I? Coming back to the board of Potluck.

LaBerge: How important publicity is for something like this.

Jurs: Oh, yes, publicity is extremely important.

LaBerge: So you got things in the Montclarion, the Examiner. How about the Oakland Tribune?

Jurs: The Tribune was never, then, very helpful although we tried hard. We got publicity wherever we could and we began to be known. Many people said what a good idea Potluck was and many people have said about Potluck, "I thought of something like that myself but I didn't know how to get it started." I didn't know how to get started either but you learn by doing and find that you know more than you think you do or you know someone who can help you.

Regular Food Donations from the East Bay

Jurs: We began to receive food donations on a regular basis. What we liked and still like are regular donations. Restaurants and caterers are really the best sources. We got, and still do get, really too much bread. Bakers want to be able to tell people that they have a variety of breads and they want it to be fresh. So they give away what is not used. We had to think of all kinds of things to do with bread. Lately, after I departed, a young woman, who is now a member of the board and who is a cateress, dreamed up a lot of good recipes of ways to use bread. Potluck invited those running these food serving programs to come if they wanted to learn ways to use bread.

LaBerge: That was a good idea.

Jurs: Yes, I wish I'd had that idea. I thought it was a great plan.

LaBerge: Because I used to pick up for Daily Bread and I would pick up at a bakery and sometimes those bags were so heavy, full of bread.

Jurs: Yes, they are. There still is too much bread.

Along the way I learned about the work of Daily Bread. I didn't know anything about them and I called and got Carolyn North, the founder, to come to one of our meetings. I didn't want to move in on their territory. She said that there was plenty of room for all of us. She came to our meeting and described what their program involved.

A couple of years ago, she called me. She wondered if Potluck would like to join forces with Daily Bread. The board discussed it and the plan fell through. That was after I had left Potluck. She wanted to retire to the country but wanted to keep Daily Bread alive. That group operates in a different way but we've always been friendly.

We did, and do, pick up food not only in Oakland but also on the other side of the [Caldecott] tunnel. We did not want food to be out of refrigeration or out of the oven for too long. Nutritionists had said to me that we didn't have to worry too much in our climate but that they would worry about food kept slightly warm for long periods of time.

LaBerge: Oh, you mean like in a buffet, when they have them--

Jurs: As in a buffet. We've been careful about that.

Our pickups at first were done by people like my husband and me and Frits Brevet and Bob Fitzmaurice. Most had other businesses but they'd go pick up food when I'd ask them to. They took it immediately to one of the feeding groups. We had talked about whether we needed refrigeration in a car. We then had an old freezer in the basement and also an old refrigerator at our house. In the old refrigerator we keep wine and beer and soft drinks there in our basement. That meant that I had some space where things could be placed temporarily, like overnight. Bob Fitzmaurice and his wife, who live near us on Wood Drive, had refrigerator space, too. They'd had four children too and both families had earlier needed more storage space. We both had space where Potluck could store food overnight.

So they had space where we could put stuff overnight. But we were careful about taking it as quickly as we could to the place where it was going to go. We operated out of this house, from my house, my desk. We had intended to find an office and have refrigeration and maybe a freezer there. Later we decided that it worked well the way it was being done. Someone would call and say, perhaps, "We have a turkey. Can you use the turkey? It could be brought to you this afternoon," or something like that. We always, of course, said yes.

Later we decided we needed an office. We looked all around. We didn't have very much money to spend. We fretted and worried and we looked.

Friends of Oakland Potluck and Susan Linney

LaBerge: Where did you get any money, to start with?

Jurs: People donated money. This has been a very unusual organization. Just a couple of weeks ago, Bob Fitzmaurice, who's been the president until very recently, said to me, "We've never once had to worry about money." (He was originally the treasurer.) He said, "I think it's amazing, that we've never had to worry about money." People feel friendly and like the program and they want to help and so they just give. Sometimes twenty-five dollars and sometimes much less. One woman gave five dollars every year for a while. It was all she could afford. She thought the program was wonderful.

We, in those days, never asked for money. Later I thought that we should found Friends of Oakland Potluck.

LaBerge: So that people could get a tax deduction?

Jurs: Yes, they'd receive a solicitation once a year, and could then take a tax deduction. They still do that but nobody's made much of a fuss about donations. My first assistant when we were still working here in my house was Susan Linney. She's a dear and has become a very good friend. She was teaching music in the Alameda school at the time and had been recently married. She did have, somehow, one day off. She read an article in the paper about Potluck and she just called me up one day and said she'd like to help with Potluck, that she was free one day a week.

I said, "What could you do?" She told me her experience, mostly having to do with music. She's a very bright girl and I said, "Why don't you come over and talk to me about the possibility?" So she came over. We liked each other immediately and we still do. I just love her. She became my assistant. She came to my house every Tuesday and worked nearly the whole day. She's a good self-starter. I would say, "You know, we ought to be doing thus-and-so," or I had planned to do this and she would say, "I could do that." She would take a suggestion and run with it, checking always with me. She was wonderful and we worked together like a left hand and a right hand. It was marvelous.

LaBerge: And this wasn't just typing, this was making phone calls--?

Jurs: This wasn't typing. I'd ask her to do anything that I would be doing myself. She would see about printing, or inquire about ads or call the Jewish publication or the Catholic publication. She could do almost anything and could talk to anyone. She's young but she's one of my dearest friends. I know she feels the same about me.

Later, she had a baby. We had rented an office and she continued to help every Tuesday. Then she got pregnant and had a baby. On Tuesday she'd bring the baby to the office and continue to work with me. Later, she'd bring a playpen. We didn't have a very big office but I loved having the baby there. That's the way it ought to be, I think: people dropping by, and a baby in the playpen right there in the office.

When her little girl reached the toddler age it was too hard to bring her but there were things Susan could do at home. Now she's got another child; her little girl is five and her little boy is one and a half, I think, or two. They're all my very good friends, I send the children birthday presents, we call each other often. She was one answer to a prayer.



At the Oakland Potluck offices, Bob Fitzmaurice and Florence Jurs,
November 1989.

Office in Preservation Park and a Van

Jurs: When we looked for an office I had heard about Preservation Park in downtown Oakland. A certain percentage of the old buildings were to be preserved for the use of nonprofit agencies and the rent was not to be too high. We went there, I and a number of others, to look at the offices which were available. We took a space, a small space, in a building in Preservation Park. We didn't have any furniture; we didn't have anything.

But one of our volunteers said he had a lot of extra office furniture he could give us. He gave us desk chairs and two desks and other useful things.

LaBerge: How much was the rent, about?

Jurs: It was not high, I think that it was seventy-five dollars a month.

LaBerge: But whatever it was, it was low enough that you had enough money to do this?

Jurs: Yes, but we worried.

Another beautiful thing happened one day. A man whom I did not know, who was also a lawyer, called me and he said, "Mrs. Jurs, I'm interested in hearing about Oakland Potluck. I've been reading and hearing about it for some time. I know that you have rather lately moved to Preservation Park and that you have an office there." He asked me a lot of questions.

Then he said, "I think I know about how much your rental bill is. What do you pay?" I could see he was a public-spirited person and so I told him what we paid. He said, "I think I have very good news for you. My wife and I have talked this over and we want for a year, to pay your office rent." That was after we'd been in this office about three months. For a whole year they paid the rent and their check came the very end of each month to pay the next month's rent. It made us feel so provident to know that our rent would be paid for a year. It was a wonderful donation. His name was Peter Stanwyck. He came to all our gatherings and was a real friend. The next year he said, "We like to pass on our help to other organizations but what I'd like to do is continue to pay \$50 of the rent each month." But a whole year had gone by, and we'd been able to amass a little bit more money. The first rental space was very small and when somebody in the building moved out, we moved into a larger office in the same building, right across the hall, which is where they

still are. It is a very pleasant office but now, many years later, it is becoming too small.

Bob Orser of the Management Center gave me a filing cabinet for that office. Many people were helpful. I may have mentioned that a woman, Beverly Shaw, phoned me and said that her only skills were secretarial and that she would like to help. She became our unpaid secretary for a long time and she still helps. Later, Dal Sellman appeared and became our driver. Then the Glenview Woman's Club, which had sold their building were looking for good causes to support. They didn't know anything about any of us and we did not know them. They knew about Potluck's work and they asked if we would like a van.

LaBerge: They gave you a van?

Jurs: Yes, gave it, as part of the money from selling their building. Actually, they gave us \$35,000. That was astounding to us. Bob Fitzmaurice who had been all this time on our board, was buying a fleet of five Fords for his company, and we were able to buy our van, a sixth car, at a fleet price. Therefore, we had money to pay the insurance and the gas. We were able to participate in the lower cost because of the numbers. All kinds of lovely things like that happened. One time about then Gene and I, my husband and I, were invited to a brunch with a group of very nice people. There was somebody there whom we had never met. I happened to get talking to the woman before brunch. She asked me what I did. I said that I was working on the organization of Oakland Potluck and I described it to her. She knew a little about it. Lo and behold, there soon came a check for \$1,000 from her, and the next day came another check for \$1,000 from their family foundation. We weren't accustomed to receiving a couple of thousand dollars so easily.

Amusing Anecdotes

Jurs: There were many funny stories, funny human interest stories about Potluck that we could tell. The first time we got a sizeable food donation a woman had called up. She said she got my number out of the telephone book, and she asked, "Are you the woman that has to do with food?" I said yes and she said, "Oh, I've had such a time finding you. I read in the Examiner a story about Oakland Potluck and about you. I thought it was such a wonderful idea." She said she worked in middle management for a company having to do with food. They had been supplying the Marriott Hotel with Danish pastries, wrapped two together, which had to be

frozen and then popped into an oven right away. They could not be thawed.

Marriott, after quite a long time and a lot of big orders, had decided that they wanted the pastries packed singly and they canceled their order. She said, "We now have 7,000 frozen coffee cakes packed two together. I remembered reading that article and I thought of you. I could not dredge up the name of your organization and I could not remember your name. I asked my boyfriend, who had also read the article. He couldn't think of your name." She asked her sister, and her sister tried to remember my name. Finally the sister called her in the evening and said, "I think that woman's first name was Florence and I think her last name began with J."

They pondered some more, and the boyfriend or somebody suddenly said, "You know, I wonder if her name was Jurs. J-u-r-s sticks in my head." So she looked in the phone book. Luckily, my husband and I have separate phones because we both get many calls. I'm listed as Florence L. Jurs. So she called me and told me that she had these 7,000 frozen coffee cakes if I wanted them.

We had never dealt with anything frozen, except maybe a turkey. I said, "I'll take them," and then I thought, "What am I going to do with them? How can I freeze that many?" I consulted my husband and he said he'd go to work on the problem. People used to buy a whole lamb or a whole beef and cut them up and store them in rented food lockers. They don't do that much any more. He located a food locker and reserved space for the 7,000 frozen coffee cakes.

I arranged to keep them there for two weeks. I called all the groups that were serving our food and told them if they came to get it, we could divide 7,000 frozen coffee cakes among them all. The small groups got a small amount. The freezer locker people couldn't deal with giving out the coffee cake so I came to the locker twice a week and sat in front of the locker in a chair which I brought from home and doled out the coffee cakes according to the numbers of hungry people they fed. They had to hurry home to freeze the coffee cakes. That was our first big order, our first big donation and we thought it was wonderful.

A lot of funny things happen. One time someone called from Granny Goose, the potato chip people. They had given us potato chips before but this time they had a whole truck load for us if someone could pick them up. The potato chips were all bagged and each one was dated. The date was still a little time away but

they had to be used very soon. Of course I said, "Yes, I'll take them gladly and we'll come to pick them up."

Bob Fitzmaurice and Frits Brevet took one of the trucks from Bob Fitzmaurice's business, went over to the city and picked up the potato chips. They had lashed them down on the top of the truck and were driving back to this side of the Bay. (I think they had to go to the city to get them or at least quite a long ways away. I've forgotten the details.) They didn't lash them down well enough and potato chips don't weigh anything. All these bags began to blow off in the wind on the freeway. They had a terrible time retrieving them but they laughed about it.

It was all really fun because we felt we were doing something useful. The organization kept growing, and people were so generous. It was fun and we began to believe that we could solve any problem that came along.

Then a woman volunteered. Her name was Dottie Goldsmith and she had been a secretary to Dick Spees when he was a vice president at Kaiser Aluminum. He later served on Oakland's City Council. He is still a member and is currently vice mayor. She volunteered to work in our office. We needed volunteers all day to answer the phone at the office. It was her husband, Michael Goldsmith, who donated so much office furniture. He had a thriving business but had closed down some offices and had much extra furniture.

One Paid Staffperson##

Jurs: I took a day a week at the office but I actually worked more than that. I did a lot of work at home, too. I took a full day, actually maybe I took two full days. Then Susan came, and I found many volunteers to help. Then we eventually hired a young woman to work half-time. We advertised in a publication published by the Management Center, describing job opportunities (Opportunity NOCS). Through it we got the names of some people who were looking for jobs. One of these people was a very attractive young woman, a student at Cal, had thought of becoming a doctor but had found that she could not afford the cost of the long training period. Instead, she anticipated doing public health work of some kind.

In the meantime she could work every afternoon from one o'clock to five. She was our first paid employee. I would work

in the office many mornings and there were also other morning volunteers, some of them retired businessmen.

Later the board felt they wanted an older person. I got along well with the Cal student but I was there and was able to supervise that time. She hadn't had a lot of experience. I think that when I was no longer there, things did not run so smoothly.

Now there is an office manager who works from something like eleven to five o'clock, I think. She's an experienced person and has also been a volunteer. She seems to work very well with the volunteers. She's been in the job about a year. (There is now a full-time manager.)

LaBerge: What's her name?

Jurs: Her name is Elouise Bodine. She very recently resigned and a new person has just been hired as office manager. Her name is Jane Doyle.

Food-Serving Organizations

Jurs: Potluck was a very time-consuming kind of an organization, but it was fun because it had so many facets. I wanted very badly and the others all agreed, to have the agency representative of the way Oakland is in its racial diversity, its geographic diversity. As it grew and as we took on additional food-serving associates we were careful to select a wide variety. We started with Project Safety Net and went on to work with thirty-three different organizations. Some were connected with a church or temple. One is the Intertribal Friendship House. Another is a group which helps political refugees from Latin America. They are all different.

We found a very good volunteer who had a full-time job but wanted to help. When we were ready to take on another food-serving associate, I would call her and arrange for her to go to the site and interview those in charge. We wanted to be sure that our associates were responsible people and that the food site was clean and well run. Of course, those places that serve food are also inspected by the public health department. We developed a list of criteria for our volunteers to check. Our volunteer was very good. She covered everything on our list, made her own observations and reported back to me. We never had the slightest bit of trouble and no one has ever gotten sick.

Oakland Potluck is now about ten years old and I think that is a very good record.

One funny thing happened a few years ago while I was still working with Potluck. A woman called me to say that she would like to help us obtain food. She said, "Have you thought of the malls and such places as a source for food?" I said that we had not. She said, "I can get all kinds of food from Hilltop." (I think that was the one.) "I go there all the time. I get food enough for my family and I have four children." I said, "Just extra food, just being given away?" "Yes, from the doughnut store, from all those different places that are serving food. I get it all the time, and I get so much that I can easily get plenty for Oakland Potluck if you'd like it."

I said, "That would be wonderful. We'll pick it up from you if you'll get it." She told where she lived in west Berkeley and I arranged for one of our volunteers to pick up the food. He said later that there was a terrible stench at her house. He took the food but he threw it all away. He just didn't feel good about it and he didn't feel good about the cleanliness of that woman and the yard.

I decided that I would have to call her. She had been planning to give us food every week and I knew that I would have to stop her contributions. I called her, told her that we very much appreciated her interest and her help but I said that we had to be very careful about the food we collected, that we had pure food regulations which we had to follow. I don't remember all that I said but then I asked her where she got the food. I said, "Where are you getting it?" She said, "It's just terrible. There's so much waste everywhere." I asked her again where she got the food and she said, "I just go to the dumpster. I pick it out of the dumpster." I said, "Aren't you afraid your children are going to get sick?" She said, "Oh, no, yesterday I brought home a whole lot of fish, enough to feed the whole family."

LaBerge: Oh no! [laughter]

Jurs: She said, "We live on that food. I've gotten boxes of strawberries that were just slightly old but were being thrown away." That's what she was giving us and that's what she'd been throwing out in her yard.

I decided I'd have to be frank and I said, "You know, we're a group that could be sued and we just can't take that chance." She told me that was a ridiculous stand to take; if I wanted wasted food, that was the place to get it and that I was passing up a wonderful opportunity, and hurting my own organization. She

really lit into me. She said, "You get it probably just before it goes into the dumpster." That is true. What we receive is surplus food.

LaBerge: Yes, but someone knows where it's going and packs it the right way.

Jurs: Yes, they do. And they're anxious not to have to throw it into the dumpster. So you see, we've had some unexpected adventures.

Seven Hundred Monthly Pickups

LaBerge: I'm sure. Can you remember the names of some of the places where you took food and then also the places that gave you food, like the main places besides the Lakeview Club?

Jurs: Yes. They have regular donors now. Just Desserts is one. I'm not sure of the number now but there are more than 100 regular donors and many donations which aren't given on a regular basis.

LaBerge: But something in that range?

Jurs: They are making lots of pickups, about 700 pickups a month. The rest come from non-regular donors. Actually, I think maybe it's 200 or 300 now. I used to know all the statistics. We needed to have statistics on it, to see whether we were growing. People always said to me, "How many people do you feed a month?" Well, you don't know how to answer that accurately because you get a sack of potato chips and you don't know how many people it feeds.

So we finally decided the only way we could do it was to count the number of pickups which we arranged. When I say 700 pickups, some of them may be a whole truckload of produce for one pickup or it may be just one turkey. It isn't very accurate, but it amounts to a lot of food.

The last I knew, they were working with thirty-five different groups. I see the statistics, but I don't try to keep them in my head any more. The Lakeview Club still gives, Just Desserts gives food every day both from Berkeley and from Oakland, on Piedmont Avenue.

So the statistics have been a problem. One of the groups was feeding 300 people a day. So you see, they range from the Woman's Refuge--there are only twenty women, twenty women and a few children there. It's very secret, so the husbands or the

boyfriends don't know where the women are. It ranges from feeding twenty people there to 300 somewhere else. We've gotten all kinds of food, sometimes whole dinners, sometimes enough for 150 dinners.

Oakland Coliseum and Hattie Allen's Church

Jurs: Somebody called me up at another time quite a long time ago and said, "I read about Oakland Potluck in the paper and I wanted to tell you something but I don't want to give you my name. I'm an employee at the Oakland Coliseum. I want to tell you that there's enormous waste there." So I said, "Thank you very much for telling me. I'll call them. Do you know who the caterer is who prepares that food?" She gave me the name but she didn't want to give her name. She said, "They throw away hot dogs and they throw away things every day during the games, quantities of good food."

So I called, but the catering company didn't want to give food to us because they had had a bad experience in Chicago. Somebody got sick there and they were sued. I told them all about our careful food laws and I told them how careful we were but they were very nervous about giving food to us.

I suddenly thought of George Vukasin, who was a friend of mine. He used to be a member of the Oakland City Council. He's a Republican and I have signed for him every time he ran after the first time. I like, admire, and respect him. He's president of the Oakland Coliseum Board now. He is the owner of Peerless Coffee Company. He knows the food people. He was, and still is, one of Potluck's advisors.

I told him that I was trying to get this food and wasn't able to, could he help? And he said, "Sure, I'll take care of it," so he did. We get all the leftover food from there during the time the games are on. There are hot dogs and hamburgers, and they were throwing them all away! It was perfectly good food and untouched. Most of us at home rewarm leftover hot dogs.

LaBerge: Yes, eat them the next day.

Jurs: But they were throwing it all away. My housekeeper picks up the Coliseum leftovers one day a week. She gets uncooked hamburgers and hot dogs and buns, lots of food. A number of others pick up food there, too.

LaBerge: So someone must go there every day that there's a game.

Jurs: Yes, they do.

LaBerge: Wow. What's the name of your housekeeper?

Jurs: Hattie Allen.

LaBerge: So her group is still very much a part of Potluck?

Jurs: The Seventh Day Adventists, yes, they are getting more food. She loves to have the hot dogs and the hamburgers. I think she picks up food at Just Desserts too, she or one of her people. She and the people with whom she's working at her church usually work all day and it's hard for them to go and pick up food.

LaBerge: In the middle of the day.

Jurs: Yes, but they do it. She goes on Sunday, I think, to the Coliseum.

LaBerge: And the Coliseum nowadays, they have so many different little booths. They have all kinds of food besides hamburgers and hot dogs now.

Jurs: Yes, they do and the Potluck associates receive all kinds.

Festival at the Lake and the Barge

Jurs: We also receive much, much food from the Festival at the Lake. I had friends who participated in the events there and we arranged to pick up some of the food. The next year I asked Dal Sellman to attend a preliminary planning meeting. Dal is so enthusiastic about the Potluck program and he went and talked to all the concessionaires. Now we get quite a lot of food. One of our board members had a brilliant idea. It had been difficult to pick up the food because cars were not allowed until the end of the Festival. Then there's a crush and it's so hard to pick up the leftovers. The suggestion was to have a barge waiting on the other side of the lake where there's a pier.

Shortly before this I attended a luncheon for St. Paul's Episcopal School at Claremont Country Club. I sat next to a man, a lawyer in San Francisco, who asked me about my interests. I told him about Potluck, one of my major interests then. He is an eager rower on Lake Merritt and rowed weekly with a group there.

They put on a regatta every year on the lake. He said that he would like to give some of the proceeds to Potluck. He sent us \$100 or \$200--\$200 I think--on the strength of meeting me that once at that breakfast. We stayed in touch. His group has given more money. In the meantime our board member called him and he told her that there was a barge on the lake. He told her how to arrange it and now every year Potluck picks up food on the other side of the lake where the barge brings it.

LaBerge: Oh, I think that's so funny.

Jurs: They collect the food, so they can do it all during the Festival and take it over to the cars on the other side. At the end of the celebration they can take the food earlier. Before, they weren't able to deliver it until ten or eleven o'clock at night, after the festival had ended, which was a nuisance. It was a brilliant idea and has saved much time and energy.

The Festival participants have fun. They all love it. They love to collect the food and take it over to the barge. They take their children with them and everybody enjoys the excitement at the same time they are doing a useful piece of work.

LaBerge: Oh, the stories like this are wonderful. Who would ever think? You can see that being a feature story in a newspaper, about the barge, with a picture and the whole thing.

Jurs: Yes, you can. The story has been on TV. Betty Ann Bruno was helpful at KTVU. We have had some TV coverage but there are more stories that would warrant that kind of coverage.

LaBerge: Well, any other unusual things like the Coliseum or the Festival at the Lake?

Jurs: Some Safeways have been helpful. It depends on the manager. The manager has the say. One of them sells bread at a very low rate. Others give the stale bread to Potluck.

LaBerge: And it's funny, some people really do have a deep-seated worry about something's going to happen to them if they give it away.

Jurs: Oh, they do.

Food from the U.C. Campus and Other Locations

LaBerge: There was an issue on the Berkeley campus, because I used to live in Berkeley, and that's how I got involved in Daily Bread. Someone had the idea that we could pick up at all the dorms, and there was real resistance that there was going to be some liability there, whereas we picked up--

Jurs: We have had a couple of dorms and living groups who contributed food. Mills College has given food twice a year at the end of each semester. I don't know whether that's still going on or not.

LaBerge: One of the best places on campus was the Faculty Club. They had both wonderful food, and they were really gracious.

Jurs: Oh, I tried to get their food. I can't remember. I tried to get it through Frannie Newman. Frank Newman, her husband, is a lawyer at Boalt Hall and was for a time a member of the California Supreme Court. They're friends of ours. I tried, through Frannie, to get food from the Faculty Club but they did not want to give it to us.

LaBerge: Maybe it was because it was already being picked up by Daily Bread.

Jurs: Maybe. I've forgotten what the issue was but they turned us down and I don't think we ever got any food from them. But we have had several living groups who have given us food. They have student managers that run everything. Of course, their kitchens are inspected by the public health department. I'm fairly sure we still get food from some of them. I was able to get a couple of those lined up.

I thought too of sororities, I thought some of the sororities would do it, but they didn't seem then to be interested. The men were more interested! I don't know why.

LaBerge: Just as an aside, I don't know if it's been completed yet, but Frank Newman was interviewed for an oral history.¹

Jurs: Oh, was he? I'm going to call him today. I became acquainted yesterday with a young woman who is with the Coro Foundation and she wants to work on human rights.

¹ See Frank Newman, Oral History Interview, conducted 1989 and 1991 by Carole Hicke, Regional Oral History Office, University of California at Berkeley, for the California State Archives State Government Oral History Program.

LaBerge: Oh, he'd be the perfect one.

Jurs: Well, John Austin¹, his oral history was recently done. He is a long time friend. Did they ever do Carl Helmholtz?² He's a professor emeritus.

LaBerge: Yes. What were some of the other groups where you took food besides the Seventh Day Adventist Church--not all of them, but just off the top of your head, some of the first ones maybe?

Jurs: A large one, feeding about 300 people daily at different sites, was made up of a coalition of churches and synagogues, and was very effective. That was Project Safety Net.

LaBerge: What about Mother Mary Ann Wright?

Jurs: Yes, we give food to her. She and I have connected some. We've given food to her. She has a lot of help nowadays.

LaBerge: Probably too from publicity--that's the only way I know is from reading about her.

Jurs: She was Oakland's Mother of the Year one year. She came to some of our events and I went to some of hers. But I think there are others that need help more. Perhaps the Intertribal Friendship House is one.

LaBerge: Where is that?

Jurs: That's in downtown Oakland. They're all in Oakland. We pick up food in Berkeley and Hayward but all our associated organizations are in Oakland. We picked up food from the Orinda Country Club for quite a while. That was further than we usually go, but they have buffet suppers on Sunday and had a lot of food to give. I don't know whether Potluck is still getting food from them.

LaBerge: But then places like the Women's Refuge, you take it to, or you did take it to.

¹ See John P. Austin, "Growth of Morrison and Foerster from 1940s to 1980s: A Perspective," an oral history conducted in 1990 by Carole Hicke, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1993.

² See Carl Helmholtz, "Faculty Governance and Physics at the University of California, Berkeley, 1937-1990," an oral history conducted in 1984-1990 by Ann Lage, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1993.

Jurs: Or I sent somebody. Originally I went, and then I got this nice young woman to do it.

Volunteers and an Advisory Committee##

LaBerge: Did you feel like you should check up on the volunteers? For instance, if you didn't find out about the woman who was getting the food from the dumpster, you would have been--

Jurs: Oh, yes.

LaBerge: So how did you handle that? Because you don't like to say, "No, we don't need your help."

Jurs: No. I tried very hard to stay in touch. I've worked with so many volunteers and I know that they melt away if nobody connects with them. So I don't know how they're handling it at this point but then I was in the office all the time. The organization was smaller and I knew who the volunteers were. There is still a chairman of volunteers on the board.

We really have never had to recruit volunteers. I thought we needed an Advisory Committee. I'm a member of several advisory committees and I think it's useless to meet once a year just to have lunch. So I said, "We would like to consult you but it would probably be by way of the phone," (as I did with George Vukasin, who was on that list). Sometimes you need the help of a political person or a corporate person.

I think names mean a good deal, so we list them down at the bottom or down the side of stationery. They don't always bother to come to the annual meeting, but sometimes they do. If something good happens, they tend to call up and give their congratulations and they stay loosely connected. We didn't ever have meetings with them and I still believe that that is unnecessary.

I am listed as an advisor to several organizations and most of them call me very infrequently. They like to list the names of supporters and I suppose that that is useful.

Jurs: I'm on advisory committees currently for East Bay Agency for Children, for Potluck, for Friends of Oakland Parks and Recreation, for St. Paul's Episcopal School, for the Junior Center of the Arts & Science, for the East Bay Community Foundation.

Aside on St. Paul's School

LaBerge: How did the connection with St. Paul come about? We'll just make a little digression there.

Jurs: When the headmaster, Rick Ackerly, came to Oakland maybe five years ago, a friend asked me to have lunch with him and with her. He and I had a good time talking to each other, so he asked me to come to visit his school, which I did. I was much interested. Then he asked me to be on a committee having to do with connections around Oakland. He was trying to make connections with the neighboring public schools. Then we invited him and his wife for dinner and we've had them several times since. We like them very much. I'm on St. Paul's committee still.

LaBerge: And you still are on the board?

Jurs: I'm not on the board, I'm on the advisory committee. But I have taken a number of people to visit it and I've been somewhat active.

My friend asked me to have lunch with Rick. We became good friends. We discussed a lot and so he asked me to do some things at his school. That's how I got connected, and I was very interested. I have always thought it better if schools are not connected to churches; I think education and religion should be separate.

LaBerge: I was surprised, just because we've talked about how you've been so involved in the public schools, to see your name there, because I knew that you really support the public schools.

Jurs: Yes, I did. So I told him this the first time I met him. He understood very well, he knows the issue. I visited and found out that they have chapel once a week but they have a rabbi one time, and a Buddhist another time. They're not trying to get their students to join their church at all. So yes, it was really because of Rick himself that I became somewhat connected with St. Paul's School.

I have a lot of young friends who have children two or three or four years old and who are looking around at private schools, so I arranged for them to go and visit. Rick was having breakfasts once a month for people who wanted to see the school.

Thirty-five Cities Request Start-up Help the First Year

LaBerge: Well, back to Oakland Potluck. In the beginning, you were saying something about why you didn't, say, connect with the city of Oakland, or make it a part of that.

Jurs: I thought that it was better, politically and for other reasons, to operate on our own. Our organization was not required to play by city rules. We did not need to have food serving associates in all sections of the city or to serve certain segments of the population. It seemed to me that we were freer. In many ways, our goals were the same but we could operate in our own way.

LaBerge: So what kind of connection at all is there with the city now?

Jurs: None.

LaBerge: None. Just if you happen to call somebody to ask a question?

Jurs: Yes.

LaBerge: Or if they donate the chicken dinners or something like that.

Jurs: That's right. No, there's no connection whatsoever. And I think it's better that there is not.

In the beginning, I got a lot of requests from other cities and places for start-up help when they heard about Oakland Potluck. I told them how we did it, what had happened here, about going to the city but deciding to handle it on our own. But I said, "Every community is different and I think what happened here might not be feasible in your city, or even desirable, so you have to figure out your course on your own. I'd be certainly glad to tell you," I always said, "about how we did it here. Remember that what works here may not work in your community. Cities are different sizes and have different needs and their climate is different. All those things enter in. You can't use us as a model but you can get ideas perhaps from Oakland Potluck."

LaBerge: Which cities have called you to get your help?

Jurs: In the first year, there were thirty-five. That was astonishing to me. Three were in Hawaii, three different islands in Hawaii. I think I know how that happened. One young woman from one of the islands, called me here at home. She was visiting her family

here on the mainland and heard or read about Potluck. She thought that it was such a good idea that she could carry back to Hawaii. So I thought maybe the other two from Hawaii learned about it in similar ways.

But we heard from Dutchess County, New York; we heard from Arkansas, Kansas, several in California and many others. Organizations to feed the hungry have sprung up all over the country. I don't know how they learned so early about Potluck. They'd either phone or write me a letter. They would say, "Can you tell me how you got started. I'm very interested and would like to do something similar in this community."

LaBerge: For instance, you don't know how the people in Arkansas heard about your name?

Jurs: No, I have no idea, nor how would they in Dutchess County, New York, or how would they in Kansas. I'm sure in our records down at Potluck, we have lists of all of those queries. I don't think that such requests are coming now. It's kind of an old story now.

We were on a trip to the South Pacific not very long ago. I met an American couple, told them about Potluck and they were very interested. They came from southern California. She had me send her everything I could think of about Potluck.

In the beginning, some people said, "You should charge them for that help," but I'm not in that business.

LaBerge: And that's not the spirit of the thing.

Jurs: No. We just wanted to feed all the hungry people we could.

LaBerge: Well, you never know. Someone from here who knows about it may have a relative in Kansas, and mentioned it to them and somehow came about that way.

Jurs: And then they might send an article telling about it or something.

LaBerge: Yes.

Jurs: I suppose that happens. But to have so many inquiries in the first year did really seem amazing. But now many similar groups operate in different ways and in different places.

Screening Volunteers

LaBerge: And getting back to the volunteers: if someone called you and said, "I'd like to be on the list and I'll do pickups for you and everything else," did you have some way of screening?

Jurs: A lot of them were people that I'd met. One I had known through the PTA. I didn't know Dal at all: he had read about Potluck in the paper. We didn't screen him. I would ask each one to meet with me and I would explain that I wasn't sure that we could use them, that it would depend on their interest and their capabilities.

LaBerge: And schedule, and--

Jurs: Yes. Then if they didn't look good, I didn't have to ask them to work with us. If they did, like Susan Linney, then I latched on to them.

LaBerge: Did you meet with everybody?

Jurs: I did in the beginning.

LaBerge: Do you think they still do now?

Jurs: I don't know. Some of the people that are working there in a sense came through me. Judge Louis May, who lives down the street from us, came partly because he knew me. He picked up food and then worked in the office one morning a week. A good many retired people came to us. I was interested in how many of them were, and still are, men. They seem to like to man the office, answer the phone, make connections and figure out what to do about the food.

Of course, now Elouise is in the office and is there more than half a day. I think there is now a tendency to pass the decision making on to her. The way we worked earlier was that each person in the office made his or her own decision about what serving group to call. We told them certain questions to ask; how much food do you have, how many do you think it would serve, and what is the food. Each office worker had a list of the thirty-five groups that we were working with and would choose according to the amount of food, the size of the serving group or the day that it served. They made the decision on the spot.

After I left Dal did a great deal of the decision making because he was doing so much delivering and he knew all the serving groups. The office volunteers didn't know quite as well

about each serving organization. Originally they wanted either to see or know or read about the organizations. Dal became the gatekeeper, so to speak, and they all depended on him a great deal.

Elouise, the office manager, made many of those decisions. I don't think the volunteers now play quite the crucial role that they did then. Disposal of the food was their decision. They'd think, for instance, "I know that the Chinese Community Council only wants Chinese food and we don't receive very much Chinese food. But they love fruit and they love candy and they love cookies." That then was the kind of food that we would give to the Chinese Community Council. All the volunteers in the office would know that detail. I'm not sure that that's the way it is now.

So it was really more participatory then, I think. Perhaps, therefore, more fun. However, the volunteers continue to stay with their jobs. They get something out of it. I always have liked the kind of volunteer job where I had real decisions to make and a real part to play. I always say if somebody asks me to do something, to serve on a board or to participate, "Why me? What do you think I can bring to this organization?" If I don't think I can provide real help, then I don't want to participate.

Some volunteers came originally because they knew me or other members of the board or they just liked the sound of it. Many have been extremely faithful. Barbara Gillard is one like that. Her husband was a retired judge, a bankruptcy judge. I can't remember whether I or a friend recruited her but she still works in the office every Thursday. She's very faithful. She loves the job. A long time ago, for years, she had a column in the old Montclarion, a recipe column. She's very interested in food and is a very good cook. She's a longtime friend.

LaBerge: What's Elouise's last name?

Jurs: Elouise Bodine.

Nominating Committee for the Board

LaBerge: I read just a little article, maybe last year, in the Montclarion about a new slate on the board. Are you still on the nominating committee?

Jurs: Yes.

LaBerge: How do they do that?

Jurs: I said when I left that I would like to stay on the nominating committee for a while. Ian Zellick said the same thing. He was the first president of the Potluck Board and he was active and very helpful. Because I think the nominating committee is always one of the most important committees of any organization because it means the future of the organization.

Doug Higgins, the current president, came through Peggy Stinnett. I didn't know him although I knew about him. He's a businessman in Oakland, and has been active in a lot of organizations. Peggy has talked about him and has great respect for him.

I think he's going to be very good. He has a lot of ideas, and he's enthusiastic. Potluck will change, as all organizations do. They may not change in the way that the original board had in mind. But that's the way it is and that's the way it ought to be. So I think it's better not to hang on too long.

LaBerge: You've mentioned it before. You believe it and you live it.

Jurs: Yes, I do.

LaBerge: You seem to be able to leave things and move on yourself with life.

Jurs: I have a good many interests and I have served on a lot of different boards. I have loved Potluck, and it was hard to leave but I felt that it was the right decision.

A long time ago, I was doing a newsletter for some group and I went to interview the then-new county administrator. I asked him how long he expected to stay with the job.

He said, "My belief is that you shouldn't stay anywhere as county administrator longer than seven years. Then it's time to move on." He's the one that planted that seed a long time ago in my head.

That made very good sense to me. I later worked for the Management Center and saw many groups that were stagnant and continued doing the job the same old way.

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Jurs: But I think people sort of carve out a place for themselves. It is comfortable to stay with the same old way and it's a very

unusual person who can stay in the same place for a long time and continue to be innovative.

LaBerge: It's sort of a good philosophy for anybody personally, too.

Jurs: It is for me.

LaBerge: How do you do that for yourself?

Jurs: When I worked as a part-time paid staff member for the Management Center for a while I loved it; it was very interesting to me. I liked the whole idea and I liked the variety. But there came a time when it seemed better to move on. I was on Lincoln Child Center's board for a long time. I became chairman of a two-year long-range planning study, a do-it-yourself long-range planning study, which came out very well. I had the idea of bringing people on to this committee, different people who had nothing whatsoever to do with children or with mental health or with education.

It turned out so well that I learned from that, too, that mixing things up is a very good idea. People look at issues from many different angles and you can learn from them all. I think that, either as a volunteer or in a job, you can do things the same old way for too long. One needs a transfusion once in a while. At least I do. I like a variety of people. I like to meet different people and find different ways of looking at the world.

The First Oakland Potluck Board

[Interview 4: June 16, 1994]

LaBerge: The last time we met, we talked a lot about Potluck, but I have some more questions, and after I go through all of those articles, I might have more. One thing we didn't talk about was how the board works. Can you tell me a little bit about how you picked the first board and how the decisions are made?

Jurs: The first board just happened. As I think I said, I called together people that I thought might be interested in advising and helping; they were. When you are getting something started, there are so many questions, things that need to be done. Somebody would say, "Well, I could do that," or "I'll do this," or "This is kind of my specialty," or whatever. At first we didn't have terms or a real board. We just had a bunch of people

that did what needed to be done. I did the most, of course, because it was "my child."

Ian Zellick was very, very helpful. He was working at KTVU as head of the community relations department. At that time, KTVU, the station through him was very interested in connecting with all kinds of ethnic groups and all sorts of people, in Oakland. They aired lots of programs devoted to the interests of different groups in Alameda County. He served on numerous boards at a time, like maybe ten boards at a time. He knew a lot about organization and the operations of nonprofit boards of directors. I had gotten interested in board development, board organization and how boards function best and all of that kind of thing. He and I met each other coming and going. I'd recommend him for some organization. I'd say, "Why don't you talk to Ian Zellick?" Or he'd say, "Florence Jurs would be one that might be able to help you." So we saw each other a lot. I depended on him for advice and help. He knows, in the first place, so many people in this community. I knew quite a lot of people, too. Networking when you're doing something like that is very important. He was my mainstay. We just had meetings at Potluck and then I guess I asked Ian if he would chair them.

At first I chaired the very informal meetings and then I asked Ian to do it. Of course we had to obtain our IRS nonprofit status. We had to have a board, and we had to have bylaws. But the first bylaws are necessarily all purpose bylaws because you don't exactly know what direction the organization and its board are going to take. It was all pretty casual, and we were all interested in the cause so we just worked. By the time we had to have bylaws, we had other people. Jean Gross and Bob Fitzmaurice were involved. I asked them to go to the Management Center people, knowing that that organization could be helpful.

Barbara Schilling, a co-founder and active participant at the Management Center, gave them some ideas about direction that they might take or things they needed to be careful about. We had a model sort of a setup for the board to aim at. A tentative set of bylaws was developed which of course has been changed a number of times since. It was pretty single-minded and we were "all out" for Potluck which made it easy to decide directions and priorities.

Present Board, 1994

LaBerge: How is the board different now than in the beginning? Like how are members chosen?

Jurs: Oh, now it is very different. It's more like other regular boards. Of course it's been operating now for eight or ten years. The new president has added some things as each board president and succeeding boards always do. There was a kind of reorganization just lately. They sent the reorganization suggestions to me, for comments. You know, I'm out of Potluck and I don't want to be involved in the operations. But it's much more the way boards usually operate. I can give you a copy of the current formation of the board, if you'll make a note of that. I think I have a copy upstairs. I can certainly get it.

The organization has been running pretty efficiently but I think that Doug Higgins, the new president, is going to help it to be still more efficient. He's very interested in that kind of thing. Ian was a good president, a very good president. That was a different era. He and I, Ian and I, were sort of the mainstays, at first. Bob Fitzmaurice was the treasurer. Then when I wanted to move on, Ian resigned--or his term came to an end. I didn't have a term, exactly. But I thought that it was running well, and I thought it was time for me to go because I don't think founders should stay around too long. I don't think anybody should stay too long with any organization.

For instance, I was on the Marcus Foster Institute board for some time, and I got off, partly because I thought my husband wasn't well and we were going to go on a trip and I resigned. But many of the same people are still on the board. And I must say, it's a very good board, and a very responsible board. It was founded when Marcus Foster was Oakland's school superintendent as a funding foundation for the Oakland Public Schools.

I was president at one point early on, very early on. Dick Spees followed me as president. He was the vice-president of Kaiser Aluminum. And he drew in a different group of people, which was very helpful, and they made a lot more money. I continued to be active until I decided it was time to resign. Many of the same people serve on the board after all this time and I just don't think that's a very good idea. I think it is inevitable that things change. I think that's healthy. It's very interesting to see what happens.

LaBerge: Well, so now you're on the nominating committee of Oakland Potluck. Is that what you do, nominate people to be on the board and it's voted on?

Jurs: Oh yes. It's voted on. There is a regular term of office. It was a two-year term with a chance to be on it for six years. Or, you can get off earlier. Most people seem to stay the full six years. At first, because we had a good group of people that had been working the whole time, we drew straws to see who would continue on for another two years, and then who would stay on for four. Now, for some time, they've been on the regular two-year term. And they understand that they have a two-year term but that they can stay for three consecutive terms, the way many other organizations do.

It's functioning pretty well. Now Potluck has a part-time office manager, which we didn't have before. I was actually the office manager for a long time. Then we had a young woman who was a student at Cal who came in at 1:00 p.m. She was there from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. daily to answer the phone and run the office. Since we've had an office, we've had volunteers manning the office from 9:00 or 10:00 in the morning. And then of course we've had an answering machine when people call. One of the things that we needed to cover, was if somebody suddenly called and said, "I have a lot of food for you." We didn't want to lose out on it so we had to have people covering it. The volunteers still do man the phones, at least until the office manager gets there. I don't exactly know what the hours now are but they have a lot of volunteers.

Early on we had volunteers. First my husband and I, and Bob Fitzmaurice, and people like that, picked up the donated food if it needed to be picked up. Now, of course, we have the van, and we have other drivers that can bring in the food.

Keeping Food Refrigerated and Safe to Eat

Jurs: We debated for a long time, when we were first getting started, whether to have a freezer or a refrigerator in the office. The way we handled it at first was to temporarily use our basement refrigerator for food storage. Bob Fitzmaurice and his wife, who live on Wood Drive not very far away from here, also had had four children and had a couple of refrigerators and freezers. I often had freezer space. So when we would get food, we tried to deliver it right away. But if we couldn't, (sometimes it was at night or an awkward hour), then volunteers would bring it over here to me, or I'd bring it here, or we'd take it to Bob's for temporary storage.

We decided that it was really better not to have a refrigerator and a freezer in the office. Of course, originally the office was here at our house with an answering service in Montclair and a place for mail. That turned out to be a nuisance. It was really easier just to have it at my house. It turned out that it was better to deliver the food immediately and not store it all, to immediately deliver to the group which will serve the food. There is talk now, and we've talked about this for a long time, about having the van fitted with a freezer or refrigerator. I rather liked the idea of immediately delivering it directly to the serving organization.

The way it almost always has happened is, somebody will call and say, "I have six turkeys," or "I have one turkey," or "I have a cooked meatloaf." It used to be small donations. "Can somebody get it today or can I bring it in to you?" We tried not to receive it at the office. We'd say, if they wanted to deliver it, "All right, I'll call you back and tell where to take it." And then we would arrange, if it was just for a few people, we'd arrange with a very small group, to take it that day. If there was a large quantity (as later often happened) we would call a group which served many hungry people.

I liked that. I think it's better not to keep food too long. We really didn't have to refrigerate or freeze it, unless it was something picked up at night, or in the evening, and then it had to be kept until the next morning. But things change, and I suspect one of these days they'll want to have that refrigeration right in the van.

The system works very well. The office is an office and is considered a clearing house where arrangements are made for the food. The volunteer or the office manager calls an appropriate group and says, "I know you like this kind of food and this amount would feed so many people. Can you use it today? Or could you use it tomorrow?" And they almost always say, "Yes."

There's always one problem with this. [tape interruption]

LaBerge: You were saying how now the arrangements are made at the office.

Jurs: We've been doing that for a long time. I think the system works pretty well. I had talked to a lot of nutritionists and experts about keeping food. We didn't want anybody to get sick so we wanted to get the food to the place where it was to be served just as quickly as possible. That's one reason we originally arranged not to go very far afield, not to go to San Francisco to get food, except for potato chips or something like that. Our base was the East Bay, and it still basically is. We did go to

Hayward, and I think they may go a little further afield these days. The arrangements are basically the way they started out a system, which works very well.

LaBerge: Now, when you talked to the nutritionists about food safety and all that, are there certain laws you had to comply with, or inspections, or anything like that?

Jurs: No. But I had gone, early on, to the public health department and gotten all the literature that they had, and read everything. I read all the rules, and talked to many experts. I knew--maybe I said this before--I knew that Los Angeles people had had kind of a hard time. There were so many rules made by the local public health department and they had a hard time getting organizations like Potluck started.

I thought, we'll be very careful. We always have been very careful. When in doubt about the food, don't serve it. And we were especially careful about things like fish and shellfish, unless we knew that it was caught the day before. So we've never had the slightest bit of trouble. I think I said that the public health department, after we had been in business a year or two, called up. And I said, "Oh my, maybe we are in trouble." But they said that we were doing everything right. We've always, and I'm sure they're still doing that, leaned over backwards to be careful. We have delivered it, almost always within an hour or two after it's picked up and the various nutritionists told us, that especially in this climate, we were safe to do it that way.

Problems for Food Servers

Jurs: There is one problem. That is that groups serving food can't make plans ahead about what to serve. It may not be a very balanced meal. I think often they serve plenty of food, but it's not a very balanced meal. The point is, they're lining people's stomachs but maybe not always giving them the proper vitamins and nutrients. A lot of them try hard and they're very happy to get the food, I was very pure about this in the beginning. I wasn't going to take things like coffee and potato chips. But I found that often the people manning a food-serving organization didn't even give the coffee to the hungry people, but they'd sit in the office and want a sip of coffee. So when somebody gave us coffee (like the Peerless Coffee Company who gave us coffee) we would take it. Sometimes it was just the staff people of the organization serving the hungry that drank it. Little sacks of

potato chips turned out to be very handy to put in lunches and I stopped being so "pure." And I don't think they're so "pure" about it now, either. They take whatever they get.

A lot of those organizations were serving hungry people on very small budgets. A lot of these groups, especially small church groups, would cook up big pots of rice or big dishes of filling and inexpensive food. A lot of them couldn't afford to buy very much meat or things of that sort and they didn't have very many fresh vegetables. I'm sure they don't now either. They relied on canned vegetables, because they would keep.

Also, bread was a problem. It still is a kind of a problem. We've always had more bread than we knew what to do with, because bakeries want to have fresh bread every day and they want to keep a variety on hand. There's just been much too much bread donated to us. A cateress, who is now part of the board, developed lately some recipes to use bread for things like bread pudding. I thought that was a splendid idea. Bread pudding, and what else? Stuffing and different ways that they could use bread.

Most of the people serving food like the sliced soft bread, partly because it's easier to make sandwiches and partly because a lot of people are very used to that soft kind of bread and like that better than the hard peasant-style bread. So there's been always a lot of bread and not nearly as much meat. We always used to be--I don't know how it is right now--delighted when people gave meat or proteins to us. Chickens or turkeys or things like that. I doubt that the meals are very well balanced. I know they often are not.

It occurs to me that one thing people always used to ask me was, "Are lots and lots of hungry people on drugs?" I think if they're honest, all the groups would say, "Yes, some of them are." But they feed them anyway, and should, I think. But most people are not on drugs. Many hungry people are fine people who had recently lost their jobs. The sad part was the numbers of good upstanding people who had no financial backlog. So if they lost their jobs they had a hard time feeding their families.

LaBerge: Or lost their house.

Jurs: Or lost their house. Very sad. Those were the ones that I felt the sorriest for. The hard-working kind that never thought they'd be out on the street. Some of them felt kind of embarrassed about coming to a place that serves a lot of hungry people. There are so many of them now. I doubt that they feel that way quite as much as they did.

LaBerge: I always figure anyone who is willing to come to a place for food, needs to be fed. No one would come if they didn't have to.

Jurs: That's right. That's what we always thought, too. You just don't ask questions. You just feed the people who are there. And I think most of the serving groups feel that way.

More on Other Cities

LaBerge: What about the different people from other cities who would call you and ask for help. Tell me about some of the calls you got, and how you advised people.

Jurs: Eventually I developed an informal packet. I don't think there are as many requests for that kind of thing as there were in the beginning. For the first year, we got a lot because Potluck was one of the early such organizations. I never understood how people learned about Potluck. Now, groups like this have sprung up all over the country but then all kinds of people either called or wrote letters. It was astonishing! They'd call up, say from New York state, or Arkansas, or Nebraska, from all kinds of places. They'd get me, because I was usually the one at that time in the office, that first year or two. I thought that it was important to help them in every way I could. But I told them over the phone whatever I could and I spent quite a lot of time writing letters to them, describing what we had done. But communities are so different. The way we operated simply wouldn't work in Valley Junction, Iowa, or some place like that. [laughter] Or, Dutchess County, New York, probably. It depends on the setup and it depends on the people involved and the community.

I would tell them how we got started, what we did, what had worked, and why we decided not to keep the food at the office. A lot of people thought we should have had an extra room where there would be space to keep the food. I think the tendency then would be to think, "Oh well, we'll just deliver it tomorrow." It's better to get it into the hands of the people who can use it right away. If they can't use it that day, they can use it the next day. They all had refrigeration, or some way to deal with it or else they were only serving fifteen or twenty people.

LaBerge: Particularly the bread, if it's going to be used. It'll be stale the next day.

Jurs: The reason that the recipes for using bread were good, was because they were for stale bread.

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Jurs: My suggestions were mostly how to organize or how to find volunteers. You find volunteers in different ways if you have often worked with volunteers in other roles or if you are working in a big city or a small town. Of course local publicity is very important, too.

The things I told them had to be pretty general. But they just needed reassurance, more than anything, I think. People seemed to be very nervous about whether their efforts would succeed or not. Well, you just have to start and do the best you can and hope. We had awfully good help, with awfully good people working with us.

Recruiting Volunteers

LaBerge: Well, for instance, how did you get more volunteers after you'd started up, and you needed more people to pick up and deliver?

Jurs: Those of us that were involved just called other people. There was something about that kind of a program that does entice other people. We've got all kinds of people now working in the office. One is a retired judge, one is a businessman with time, one is a retired widow--just all kinds of people who like the idea and want to do something useful. They can at least man the phones or drive a car. There still are plenty of volunteers. When my children were little, not all women worked. So people my age would say to me, "There aren't any volunteers anymore. There are no women the way there used to be. They've all got jobs." Well, many of them have jobs, but we've had no trouble at all.

Once we began to get publicity, and the Montclarion newspaper was particularly helpful, because of course I lived in Montclair and was known, and many of our volunteers came from Montclair. They ran many articles and they gave us free advertising. Still do.

LaBerge: I've seen it in the Montclarion.

Jurs: They did stories about Potluck. Whenever we had any new piece of information, I or others would call and say, "Would you be

interested in this item?" And they always were, because we were local, and I've lived in Montclair for a long time [fifty years].

The Montclarion was very helpful. Whenever there would be an article in the paper, somebody would call. One thing about Potluck, it hasn't been hard, even in this era when they say there are no volunteers, to get workers. There are retired people. There are people like the cateress who is on the board right now. She finds time. People find time. It just is no problem at all.

LaBerge: I think one of the things that makes it easy is you can volunteer for a half an hour. You can work full-time and still do that.

Jurs: That's right. Or you can say, like Susan Linney, she read about Oakland Potluck and she wanted to help. So I interviewed her, liked her enormously, and finally asked her if she'd be my assistant, which she did for several years. One day a week, one full day. But she also--I'm not quite sure if she's still doing this--would cook up a casserole or a pot of soup periodically. Once a week, I think maybe. Or at least once a month. Anyway, on a regular basis. She and others did things like that. Then she quit to have a baby. And now she's got two, so she's not working full-time for a while and she still helps Potluck.

But plenty of them would come to board meetings if we'd have them at decent hours. If they didn't volunteer to do things, they'd offer ideas and help. They'd maybe have an hour now and then to come and work. We liked it better if we could get somebody to work all morning, or a couple of hours, answering the phones. But really that hasn't been a terrible problem. Money has been no problem. We've had no trouble--at first we didn't even ask people to contribute. They just gave us money without being asked. I don't mean Potluck is rich. But we could always pay for whatever we needed. There's something about it that appeals. Nobody likes to think of hungry people on our streets. We all know that there are so many of them. I think it's an appealing kind of thing to volunteer for.

A Part of Oakland

LaBerge: Can you see ways that it's affected the community of Oakland?

Jurs: It's certainly become a part of Oakland now. People recognize the van. They've read stories in the paper, if they read papers. It's a part of Oakland. Quite often now, if you say you have

anything to do with Oakland Potluck they say, "Oh, I know about that. I've seen the van." Or, "I've contributed some food." It's been around long enough so that it's, I think, a certain part of Oakland, a real piece of the action.

Of course it's contributed food. We've helped to feed a lot of different people so it's been a kind of a force.

LaBerge: I was wondering, for instance--I think it was last year that Oakland won an award for being a model city. I can't remember what the name of it was. I was thinking, did people come look at programs like this that Oakland has?

Jurs: Some do. St. Paul's School (a private school) sends their fifth and sixth grades to Potluck offices to see its operation. First graders make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches once a month and deliver them to a group that's feeding the hungry. The children know what they're doing, and where the food goes.

Reliability

LaBerge: You've worked with a lot of volunteers. What makes a good volunteer?

Jurs: Someone who does what he or she says he will. That is probably the most important. The kind of volunteer that is not useful, (we haven't seen very many of them), talks a good language and then they don't do anything. It's better if they say, "I have Tuesday morning for two hours once a month," or once a week, or whatever, and then really mean to be there, unless they let you know. Most people have understood that, so they tell us ahead. We've had very reliable people. Barbara Gillard, for instance, has worked in the office ever since we took the office at Preservation Park. She and her husband travel but she arranges way ahead and tells everybody that she's not going to be in the office. She comes every Thursday. We've had a lot of volunteers of that sort and they are wonderful.

I think if they're reliable, that's probably the most important asset. Reliability is probably the most important. They don't volunteer unless it seems to them like a good cause and so they're interested, because it is a good cause. People really like to be helpful. Volunteers who help, not just at Potluck, but in all the volunteer organizations that I've been a part of, get much pleasure from their efforts.

When I worked for the Management Center, the director and I used to do a training session every so often for people who were coming on boards for the first time. Many people come on a board and they really don't know what they're supposed to do or what their responsibilities will be. We discussed with them what their board responsibilities really are. We also told them a lot about what benefits they get out of it themselves. They really do. They make friends; they learn. People like to feel useful. Most people really like to feel they're doing something worthwhile.

If they find an organization where they very much like the other participants working, it's even more fun.

LaBerge: Have you had any contact with the different food banks around?

Jurs: We haven't really used the food banks. We have liked to have all the food donated to our organization for the use of our serving groups, and we have received enough to serve them, too. We started off with one group, then as we got more food we took on another and another. Now there's something like thirty-five separate kinds of groups representing all kinds of different interests on purpose. Ethnic, and religious, and just all kinds of interests.

What did you ask me? I was going to come back to something.

LaBerge: Whether you had a connection with the food banks.

Jurs: No, we don't. But we work directly with our own organization. We don't have any other connections. Those groups are also getting food from other sources, often from the food bank, which is fine.

Now there are many groups feeding the hungry. And of course food, and hunger, are pretty basic needs and feelings and they all get food from any source which can provide it.

Sometimes 150 full meals may be left over, perhaps like chicken and potatoes and plates full of a perfectly balanced meal. Mostly it's just desserts, or just bread, or just rice, or single items. The servers are pretty creative. If we can take food today, we'll do it and they'll work it into whatever it is they're serving that day. But I'm sure it doesn't always turn out to be a balanced menu. I do worry the most about vegetables. I don't think they get quite enough vegetables.

LaBerge: Was there anything else you think I haven't asked you about Potluck?

Jurs: No. I think we've covered Potluck pretty well.

VIII A CENTRAL PLACE, 1977-1994

[Interview 5: June 27, 1994]##

Founding A Central Place, 1977

LaBerge: Today we thought we'd talk about A Central Place. You were just telling me that you were one of the founders, but it wasn't your idea. Whose idea was it?

Jurs: No, it wasn't my idea. It was Betty Wilson's idea. She has now moved away. It was her idea, and she came to Joan Hughes, who was a good friend of hers. I knew Betty not very well at all but Joan was my very good friend, and still is. We've worked with a lot of different organizations together. Joan said to Betty Wilson, "That is a fine idea and you should do something with it."

Betty didn't feel she knew how, and so Joan said, "I'll gather some people together to talk over the concept." She got ten of us--she herself and Betty were there, of course, and then eight more of us. All of us thought it was a good idea and we all decided to help with it.

The concept was to provide a place, sort of a home for nonprofit agencies who so far had little money. Maybe they were just starting and they were keeping the files under the bed or a helper was working at odd times. The idea was to provide a place for those people, a place that didn't cost very much, providing business machines, providing desks, providing space, providing a meeting room.

We hunted around, we all agreed to work on this plan. When the Clorox building was first built, we got free space for quite a while on the second floor of that building. Perhaps it wasn't totally free, but almost.

LaBerge: Do you know who in Clorox was responsible? Was it president Bob Shetterly?

Jurs: Mr. Shetterly was the president but we did not work with him. I can't remember who, at the top, was responsible. Carmella Johnson was the one I had a lot of dealings with later on, but she was then the head of the Clorox Foundation.

We started up and we were all people who had a good many other interests and we all worked on it. We took turns manning the office, we went to see people about funding, we got donations from business organizations. I began to do a newsletter and I did publicity. We all did everything but we had different areas of expertise. But we were good workers.

LaBerge: All from different volunteer groups?

Jurs: Yes, but we all knew each other in one way or another. That was now sixteen years ago, and I haven't been active in it for quite a long time.

Fundraiser Honoring Florence Jurs

Jurs: At one point along the way, after I was no longer active, they decided to honor me with a luncheon, for which they charged a fee. My husband and I were driving to the party, which was, of course, a fundraiser. I was sure that no one would come. Bob Blackburn was to be, and was, the master of ceremonies. He came with Marcus Foster from Philadelphia when Marcus Foster became the superintendent of schools here. Bob was his assistant, the assistant superintendent. But Bob had been around quite a long time by then and had gone through the SLA [Symbionese Liberation Army] shooting with Foster. He's a very witty fellow.

He was the master of ceremonies, and as Gene and I were driving to the event, and I think some of our daughters were with us, I thought, "What's going to happen? Nobody's going to come to this at all. We're going to get down there and nobody will be there!" It was at Goodman Hall, which then was a popular place to do that kind of stuff, before the big hotel was in place. I was absolutely sure nobody would come.

Ahead of us, I suddenly saw as we turned into downtown Oakland, there was Bob Blackburn driving along, and I knew, of course, that he was the master of ceremonies, so I thought, at least he'll be there. Supposing he has to sort of take charge of

what is supposed to be quite a lot of people and there is nobody there. I was just sure that's the way it was going to turn out.

It didn't at all. It turned out well and a lot of people came, a lot of people. It just blew my mind! They had to pay I think maybe twenty-five or thirty-five dollars. (Now probably it would be \$100 or so.) Some people that I was astonished to see there came, from the past. One of them was a man, a black man, a dear, with the Oakland Fire Department and he came. I hadn't seen him for a long time. But when I was doing the Resource Program for the Oakland schools, (Oakland Public Schools Volunteers) I asked him if he would do a program in the elementary schools about the fire department.

He talked so nicely to the children. I asked him if he'd be willing to come to kindergarten or to first grade, maybe second grade, and talk to kids about what a fireman does. So he did that and he loved it. He was very good at it too. He let the little ones put his hat on and his boots and he told them about fire, but not scarily and telling them about being careful.

Then I had run into him again when I was on the board for a long time of Lincoln Child Center, which works with emotionally troubled kids. I was on a committee to look at some building remodeling they were planning to do, and here was this man, quite a lot of years later. The school volunteers and the Resource Program has been a fine thing for him, because it had never occurred to him to do any public speaking. He started through our program with little kids and then he began doing it more and more. Eventually he was on a speaker's bureau for the Oakland city fire department. So he felt grateful to me and to our program. He was one who turned up at that Central Place luncheon.

Quite a number of people like that came. Then also from the school volunteers, a secretary who had worked in the community resource department. She did secretarial work, and when we got out these bulletins and everything, she called for reservations. She and I had been closely in touch. She came. These were people that didn't have a lot of money to spend and I was really surprised. There were quite a lot of people from the past who turned up.

Bob Blackburn, oh, he made such an amusing talk.

LaBerge: I have a copy of it that you gave me.¹

¹ See appendix.

Jurs: He was really funny and everybody liked him. It was kind of a heart-warming event.

How A Central Place Functions

Jurs: A Central Place functioned for a long time and I was on the board for a long time, like most of the others. Some of them continued to be on the board. I have a strong feeling about not staying on anything too long. I was on the board maybe four or five years, I suppose. Usually the stint is two years and I might have even been on six. They had me come back now and then but I didn't stay on the board. I stayed very friendly with everybody, but I wasn't active after a while.

LaBerge: How did you get the word out to nonprofit agencies that you had this place, and what you were going to provide?

Jurs: How did we do it? Well, I did publicity. We tried to get stories in the paper. We got funding, a lot of these women had worked with other nonprofit agencies and knew fund-givers from various parts of the community. If we'd get some funding, then that would be an occasion for a little publicity. It occurs to me it was easier to get publicity for that organization than it was for some of the other things I've worked on. I was thinking specifically of Potluck which later seemed to me like a more sexy idea. Anyway, we got a fair amount of publicity.

We didn't need a lot of money but we did have to pay rent eventually. People gave us desks and equipment. We called the press together every so often and told them where we were and what we did.

The Steering Committee

Jurs: Some of the others were really more active. Nancy Jewel was one who was a very good leader. (Nancy Jewel, Howard Jewel's wife.) They were both very active in all kinds of rather liberal circles. She was very good at this kind of thing. There was Charnee Smit. She now works for the telephone company, and she was then active in a lot of things like the League of Women Voters. I suppose maybe that's how I got to know her. Joan Hughes had been active with me in the Volunteer Program.

LaBerge: At the school?

Jurs: At the public schools. She was on the steering committee as I was. She was one of the first that met with the committee in the very beginning when the superintendent finally decided to call us all together and help us to get started. Let me see, who else?

LaBerge: You mentioned Betty Wilson?

Jurs: Betty Wilson who was the founder.

LaBerge: What group was she?

Jurs: She wasn't tied in to quite as many groups. She was a good friend of Joan's. Betty was active in the beginning but kind of melted away; and I think she hadn't felt sure, she didn't know exactly how to get this started. Shirley Roberson was a founder. She had earlier been president of the Oakland League of Women Voters and had worked in various other capacities. Later she worked in Senator Nicholas Petris's office. How many does that make?

LaBerge: Joan, Betty, you, Shirley, Charnee, Nancy Jewel--that's six.

Jurs: Well, then there were four more. Susan Duncan was another. She is now a board member of Alameda County schools. She had also been a president of the League of Women Voters. A number of these people came through the League of Women Voters.

Jan Kaufman was another. Jan had also been a president of the League of Women Voters. She then went to work for the city. She ran Volunteers for Oakland and then she branched out. She's still working with the city. She took on all sorts of roles, continued to run Volunteers for Oakland, but a whole lot of other things, and I think she was developing all sorts of expertise. She's still working in the city organization.

Marie Converse was an active member who had also been in the League of Women Voters. She was politically active in Oakland and ran twice for the city council but was defeated each time.

Mary Geddes was another member of the group. She had a job with the city (the Redevelopment Agency). She has since moved away.

Office Space

LaBerge: Where is it located?

Jurs: It was for a long time in the Clorox building, at 1212 Broadway. It's a real part of Oakland, with twenty-five or thirty nonprofit agencies all sharing space. Later I worked for the Management Center as a paid person for several years; I worked half-time helping nonprofit agencies with management problems in the East Bay. First I did it out of my house and then we needed an office, a part-time office, so we took space at A Central Place, and that was kind of interesting to come back there some years later.

I had a desk. They have a very flexible arrangement. The League of Women Voters was there for a long time with a large room or two. I shared a desk with another organization. I needed to be there half of the week, you see, and I kept material at home but I wanted a desk and a telephone which I could use and where I could conduct interviews and see people in downtown Oakland. Some people had a whole desk, some people had a room, some groups had a small suite. It's a very flexible arrangement so that groups just starting out can pay a little and share a desk, we'll say, and groups that are fiscally solid can pay more and have a room.

There's also a meeting space, a big conference room. They had typewriters and copy machines and all the standard kinds of machines to be shared.

LaBerge: Did you get those through donations?

Jurs: Many of them. I don't know exactly what they've got now, because I'm not active any more, but it was an exciting concept. It's always exciting to see something take hold and grow, and that did grow. It's remained in business. What tends to happen is that agencies that are just getting started and have very little money or have been in business for a while but have worked out of a member's home, come there for a while, and then if they make more money or can afford it, they move someplace else. It's a way to get groups started when they are beginning. Some of them, I'm sure, fold but a lot of them get on their feet and become part of Oakland. It is a good idea.

LaBerge: It's a great idea. So each agency that used the space contributed something to it? It wasn't just free.

Jurs: Yes, and they had to serve. The people who had space there had to belong to a tenants' organization which met every month. Shirley was the leader. By the time I had office space there I felt that the tenants should be more active than they were. I don't know how it is now. A lot was done for them. I have always believed that the more individuals and groups have to do and to contribute, the more a part of it they feel.

I wasn't openly critical, but I did think many of the members failed to come to the monthly meetings and didn't take their responsibility very seriously. I suspect it's not that way any longer but I don't really know. I was one who did--as long as the Management Center had me as a representative I came to all the meetings. Many others did too. Certainly the League of Women Voters did then and many of the others. But they were all busy and harassed. So I think they didn't put quite enough time and energy into it which meant that Shirley did it or the board. I think probably that isn't the way it is now.

They have a good board so it's very active. They've just hired, not long ago, a new director who got an award of some sort as a result.

LaBerge: Do you know who that is?

Jurs: Her name is Cynthia Wyman. I don't know her, because that's a part of the present day effort and I now have no connection.

Funding and Downtown Oakland

LaBerge: Where did you get the money for funding?

Jurs: Each group contributed a little bit. We didn't contribute very much but enough to get it started and then of course, we originally got space through Clorox. We didn't own office machines--we just begged around, and various banks and other businesses gave some help. I can't remember who they were.

LaBerge: There wasn't any business that was outstanding or--?

Jurs: Well, no, but quite a lot of them did.

LaBerge: Except for Clorox.

Jurs: Clorox was helpful and quite a lot of those downtown groups contributed, and have continued to contribute. I don't know; I

could find out who has continued to be active. Shirley Roberson would know, because she stayed with it so much longer.

LaBerge: Just something that I read: there really was an effort to have it in downtown Oakland.

Jurs: Oh, yes indeed.

LaBerge: Can you tell me about that?

Jurs: Yes. The idea was that groups so often had to work in somebody's house or out wherever they could find space. They didn't pay rent and just worked wherever they could manage. It meant that these groups were operating on a shoestring. They continued to operate on a shoestring but to be downtown gave them a base and also a connection with other groups. They learned from each other, too. I think that's been one of the good things about A Central Place. Somebody says, "Well, we tried this," and then it spreads to the next group. It means that, because of the close contact, organizations can learn from each other, can share ideas and can often work together.

LaBerge: Was there some idea, too, that this might help downtown Oakland revitalize or something like that?

Jurs: Oh, indeed, I should say. That's why we wanted to be right downtown. We liked being at the Clorox building. That was when people were starting to leave downtown Oakland. A lot of people were afraid, foolishly--none of us were--but people, especially women said they were afraid to come to downtown Oakland. It got really very silly. And yes, we felt very, very strongly about helping to revitalize our downtown area.

LaBerge: And did you have to get approval from the city government or anything for any of this?

Jurs: No, we just got funding and we made connections whenever we could, but no, we didn't have to get approval. When it came to something like Potluck, of course, there were all kinds of things that I had to get approval for, like the name. I think we were quite a lot freer in that era. We weren't working around the public health department for instance.

LaBerge: Right. You were just providing a service.

IX PET PROJECTS IN OAKLAND AND ALAMEDA COUNTY##

League of Women Voters

LaBerge: Just while we were talking about this, you mentioned many women who were on the League of Women Voters, so why don't you tell me about when you were a part of that, and what prompted you to join?

Jurs: I was not nearly as active as some of these others. I was asked twice to be on the board of the League of Women Voters but I did not do it. Early on, I came to all of their meetings. I still read all their literature and contributed. They asked me to be on the board two separate times, rather far apart. The first time I realized that I wanted to actively support a candidate, actively support someone who was running for city government. You can't do that and be an officer--you can do it, but you can't lend your name if you are part of the board. They want to maintain their sort of neutral stand. If they take a stand, it's because they've studied the issue. I wanted to be politically active. I can't remember which election this was. I had been active in quite a number of local elections. In any case I resigned before I really had gotten on the board. I hadn't, I think, even been to a meeting, when I realized who was running and what was going to happen.

I wanted to do it but I wanted, more, to work on a campaign. So I never became part of the board. But I came to all of their annual meetings and I came for years to their monthly meetings. Then I just got so busy doing so many things I didn't attend, but I read and continued to read the literature that they send me.

It was a good training ground for lots of people. Lots of people learned many, many things through the League of Women Voters. They learned how city government and county government operate and what other groups are doing.

It was interesting that so many of these people who became good friends through the league, had been presidents of the local league. They were all active in community efforts and were leaders. Naturally, that's the kind that Joan and I and the others thought of as potential people to help. They all stayed with it; they all liked the idea of A Central Place.

LaBerge: It supports the view, give a busy person something to do, and it will get done.

Jurs: Yes, I know that's true.

LaBerge: Why do you think that's true?

Jurs: It's just the same whether they have volunteer jobs or salaried jobs. You get so you know how to bounce a lot of balls in the air at the same time. You know where you can cut corners and where you can't and you're used to it. All of us worked on four or five boards at the same time, three or four boards, and maybe some other volunteer roles as well. You don't even think about being busy. At our house, we also had a lot of company and guests for dinner and I, of course, had four children. You learn to do your cooking after everybody's gone to bed, or whenever you have time. [laughter] You learn how to handle it.

I don't accomplish nearly as much now. I'm still more or less active but not compared to the way I used to be. I used to--like everybody else--take on all kinds of jobs and then I'd think, this job will soon end or while I'm working on a particular campaign, I'd let up a bit on another. The busy people are the ones who like to be busy. The busy people learn who can be allies, whom to call on or who to draw in. You develop various support groups. They're all different but you learn whom to call. You get big files--[laughs] I still have big files of names of people I can call.

LaBerge: And probably you know how to not waste time, too.

Jurs: Well, yes, you do learn that. I was lucky, for instance, when I worked with the school volunteers. I had clerical help through the school system. Later after the program got going really well, an acquaintance volunteered also to aid me. She was my secretary.

LaBerge: This is Susan Linney?

Jurs: No. Susan appeared recently. No, I'm talking about a long time ago. I can't even think of the name of that woman. I just knew her through the PTA or something, and she liked to do clerical

work and asked if she could help. I don't type very fast and I don't take shorthand and that's the kind of help I needed. So with nearly all these groups, it turned out that somebody turned up. Susan Linney was a perfect example. Susan Linney didn't do secretarial work for Potluck but she did become my assistant. It was Beverly Shaw who became my valued secretary. She read about Potluck in the paper. I needed a secretary very badly then so she took over for me. She had been a private secretary all her adult life, much of the time at the university, and she did beautiful work.

A lot of people--[telephone rings] Oh, I'll just let that ring. A man is pursuing me about--oh, they often want me to--they get so they want you to endorse different things.

LaBerge: A candidate or an issue?

Jurs: In this case, an issue. He wants me to write a letter to--I told him I would review it today and he could talk to me tonight about it. I'm sure [laughing] that's he. He doesn't like to wait. You get on people's lists, you know, just as people get on my lists. I'm only about one-half as busy as I used to be.

Family Support

LaBerge: How did your family feel about your volunteering?

Jurs: I think they've always been very supportive. Gene has supported absolutely everything I've done, all the way along, and I've supported him, too. He's had interests besides his business. A long time ago when he was working for Shand and Jurs when he was young, he was on the Berkeley Planning Commission. (The company was in Berkeley.) That was a long time ago. He did that. Later he got appointed to various committees, like reviewing the Oakland city charter. Later then he was on a county hospital commission for quite a long time, and he was on the Oakland Redevelopment Agency for eight or ten years and was chairman part of the time. He was also for a long time on the board and was the president for a while of the East Bay Community Foundation. He was busy too, and of course was also helping to run Shand and Jurs Company.

He was very supportive of everything I did. He always came to events with me. I remember Abbe Foster, the wife of Marcus Foster, Oakland's beloved school superintendent, one time said to me, "Your husband always approves of what you do, doesn't he?" I

said, "Well, of course." She said, "And he always helps you whenever he can, doesn't he?" And I said, "Oh, heavens, yes. Doesn't Marcus?" Foster was so eager to recruit volunteers and so wonderful with these volunteers and so much revered in the community. She said, "No, he isn't like that at all. He doesn't really want me to be involved in things." I was quite surprised. But I guess it's different if the volunteer is your wife!
[laughs]

LaBerge: Yes, I guess it is.

Jurs: He didn't necessarily want her to stay home but he wanted her to be available. [laughter] That was very surprising to me although people aren't always all of a piece, of course.

LaBerge: Yes, you're right.

Marcus Foster and the SLA Shooting

LaBerge: Since you mentioned Marcus Foster, I wanted to ask you both about him and about the Marcus Foster Educational Institute. Why don't you tell me about him a little bit: when he came to Oakland and what he was like?

Jurs: The Oakland superintendent before him was Stuart Phillips and it was under Stuart Phillips that our volunteer program got started. Then he retired or left and I think Marcus Foster was the next one. He came to take over after Stuart Phillips. The schools were not in as much disarray then as they are now. They all had more money in those days. He came and he immediately was able to get many people involved.

I met him early on. I was then very active on the board of the Lincoln Child Center. The director of Lincoln Child Center, Jim Mann, wanted Foster to know about Lincoln Child Center. So he asked him to come to a meeting. I was on the board but it was a more inclusive, broader meeting than a board meeting. He asked me to introduce Marcus Foster. I don't know why. I suppose that it was because I was active and had been on the board of Lincoln for some time.

I had written Foster a letter to Philadelphia where he then lived as soon as I found that he had accepted the post in Oakland. I wanted him to know about the school volunteers program. Between the school volunteers and Lincoln Child Center, I got well acquainted with him as soon as he was here.

I thought he was wonderful. He started a huge community resource. Just every group, like the League of Women Voters had a couple of representatives--every group in town, the PTA, and every other group that was potentially interested in the schools. The whole thing was a giant committee but it had sections which would meet, as I remember, once a month to do whatever they were doing. It was very active, and people took astonishing interest in it.

It was also wonderful because there were West Oakland blacks and hill area whites and just all kinds of people mixed together and working together. I thought it was a wonderful exercise in the way things ought to be. He was really--I think revered is not too strong a word. He was extremely likeable. Early on I wrote him this letter telling him about the school volunteers and the resource program, and then met him about Lincoln Child Center. When I came to talk to him about any of these groups he was so interested.

Many school staff people in that era believed that volunteers were not very useful, that only professionals understood about educational issues. Dr. Foster didn't think that at all. He thought, "Use anybody with good ideas." I truly thought that he was wonderful. He was very likeable, very likeable and very intelligent. He was also interested in creative ideas.

I met his wife along the way, and knew her through--what did I know her through? Some other group. But after he'd been here for several years, he and Bob Blackburn were shot by the SLA [Symbionese Liberation Army]. Oh, that was such a shock! (Bob Blackburn had come from Philadelphia as an assistant to Dr. Foster.)

LaBerge: Tell me about that.

Jurs: Oh, it was terrible. The SLA had kidnapped Patty Hearst. I don't know all the details but they decided what they wanted was kind of a martyr to call attention to their cause. It was a great mistake to take a man like Marcus Foster, who was a hero to many, especially to blacks but also to people like me. He was really one of the heroes of my whole life. He was an astonishing man. He was very bright, very willing to hear ideas from other people. He had participated in founding an organization later called the Marcus Foster Educational Institute, still functioning today.

He developed things like "New Notions for Excellence," which is still a part of the institute. I was, I think, the second

president of the institute and also the first chairman of the New Notions for Excellence Committee. The committee had little money, but it funded and still does, good ideas from the students, teachers, anybody that had an idea, and then they'd discuss it and meet and vote on it. Everything Dr. Foster did drew in the community, which is not always easy to do.

So he was shot, and Gene and I happened to be looking at TV and saw--oh, dear--it still seems very dramatic and sad and very close. I saw Abbe Foster, whom I knew very well by then. (Foster had been in Oakland for several years by then and was still very popular.) Abbe was standing at Highland Hospital looking devastated; she had hurried to the hospital when she found that her husband had been shot. Bob Blackburn had been shot too, and also, I knew him very well. Oh, it was a harried, terrible night for everybody in Oakland.

Foster was killed immediately. There had been some kind of a night meeting at the school office, the main office downtown. Dr. Foster was shot in the driveway as he was going to his car. Bob Blackburn had walked out with him and Bob was shot too but was not killed. He was wounded, but not killed. Somebody called an ambulance; Bob Blackburn recovered. He's still my friend and he now works as a dean in the Alameda County School District.

Abbe has now moved away. Their daughter, Marcus and Abbe's daughter, is a minister. She was called someplace--they came from Philadelphia, and I can't remember where the daughter's gone now to be a minister. Abbe loves her little granddaughter and she eventually decided to give up her house here. She'd stayed here a long time after her husband had died, in the same house, but she finally moved away to live with her daughter and little granddaughter.

I liked her too. She wrote poetry. She had been a teacher, or maybe a principal, in the Philadelphia school system. That's how the two of them were acquainted.

The Marcus Foster Institute

Jurs: Well, so at the time of his--I guess--a funeral, there was a huge service. Hundreds of people came. The Marcus Foster Institute had been called something like the Oakland Public Schools Institute. I guess I was the second president of that group before Dr. Foster came. The name was changed to the Marcus Foster Institute later.

After this huge, big outpouring, every year they had a celebration of Marcus Foster. They still do and 700 or 800 people continue to come. I can't remember how many years that has been. Blacks and whites all come together once a year. But the Foster Institute was of course smaller then. Dick Spees, who was then a vice president at Kaiser Aluminum, became the president after me. I had helped to hold things together. But it was through Dick that it grew. He knew many corporate people, you see, who got interested, gave money, and supported the schools.

The Marcus Foster Institute is flourishing still. We still go each year to these banquets. All kinds of people go. It's black and white Oakland coming together, as they have for all these years in an astonishing way. They usually have a video, they've got different videos telling about Marcus Foster. We all still revere him after all this time. He was a real hero.

Then a little later, I happened to be on the [Alameda] County Grand Jury, and that was after Patricia Hearst had been in prison for a while. There was something that needed clearing up, I don't remember the details. So the grand jury was drawn in for an opinion. We'd been meeting most of the year already and had put in a lot of time. (You get very well acquainted with the people on the grand jury.) The men who were retired didn't normally dress up at all; they'd come in sweaters and things like that. I'd come in pants and casual clothes. But for some reason, I was tickled the day Patty Hearst was to be there, to see that everybody came all dressed up. It was just so funny! It was an occasion.

LaBerge: Without prearranging it?

Jurs: Nobody had said a word! I put on my suit that I wore to San Francisco. I saw all the men wearing their ties and white shirts and everything; I really laughed. I'm not sure that other people paid attention to that but I thought that was very funny.

LaBerge: That is funny.

Jurs: Patty Hearst was a little--oh, kind of an inconsequential girl. I think she'd spent all her time in jail doing her nails. She had beautiful long fancy nails. She wasn't one of the sort who impressed me.

LaBerge: I want to come back to that in a minute, but before that, what was the purpose of the Marcus Foster Institute, or what was it before that, too?

Jurs: All right. Well, it was formed as a foundation to assist the schools, monetarily or in any way it could.

LaBerge: So a private organization?

Jurs: Yes.

LaBerge: So really it wasn't government-sponsored or anything?

Jurs: No. But one of the conveners was an assistant superintendent. The members--Bob Blackburn is still on that board, for instance. And school people serve on it, but the president was often a businessman.

LaBerge: Was Jim Vohs on it?

Jurs: Yes, Jim Vohs was. So they've had a lot of corporate people and it has continued to flourish. I was interested in things like the "New Notions for Excellence," because that was kind of an innovative idea. Teachers would have ideas and so would others. They might get only \$100 or \$50 or \$25 or whatever for a good idea, but it encourages people. They spend more now.

You see, when corporate people got involved they could bring different talents to it so it became much more of an important entity. It flourished earlier but it required this corporate input. Dick Spees was very good for it. He got Kaiser people interested, and Cornell Maier especially, who was always interested in education, and still is. He gave money and talked it up and has always been very helpful.

That's how I got acquainted with Dick. Later he ran for the city council. He's now run four times and won each time. I've always supported him. In fact, I've signed for him (on his application) every time. He's lately won his fourth campaign, and I still am a staunch supporter although I am Democrat and a liberal. There are good people on every side. Dick is a very solid citizen and a nice fellow. I've always liked him. I'm still supporting him as do many Democrats, but it didn't used to be that way.

LaBerge: Well, maybe you were influential in having that done?

Jurs: No. They knew that I was a Democrat. I supported George Vukasin all along the way, he's also a Republican and a businessman. He was on the city council for a long time. He owns Peerless Coffee, and he's head of the [Oakland] Coliseum board. I like him too and respect him. If people are honest and honorable and you know where they stand, you don't have to agree with

everything they do. I agreed basically with both of those men and I've supported them all along the way, some other Republicans as well although usually I tend to be on the liberal side.

LaBerge: Well, before we leave the Marcus Foster Institute, I'm not sure when it started compared to when Prop. 13 passed, but was that one of the things that--the schools needed the money and--

Jurs: No. Prop. 13 came quite a lot later [1978]. Prop. 13 did affect other organizations, like Lincoln Child Center and some of those which with I was then working.

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The Children's Council and Theory on Change

LaBerge: You were just talking about Prop. 13 and the Lincoln Child Center.

Jurs: Yes. I was also president of the Children's Council. In light of the cuts that were to be made, and actually way before that, all groups planning for children's services should coordinate their efforts; there was then and still is, duplication of services. But it turned out to be much too hard a job. All these groups protected their base. They did not want to share the sources of income or their board members.

I and a good many other people thought that if they planned together, it would be better for all of them. That just simply did not work. That was one of the sort of semi-failures that I worked on. It was interesting, but it didn't work. It still doesn't work and people don't want it. They protect their bailiwick. People often don't look at the larger picture; they look at their own interests and their own sources of revenue.

LaBerge: Similarly, I was talking to Dr. Kay¹, whom I think I told you I interviewed. He tried to do something similar on Pill Hill with the different hospitals, to get them to all coordinate, instead of each one having their own machines and--

Jurs: All buying that expensive equipment.

¹ See Harold Kay, M.D., "A Berkeley Boy's Service to the Medical Community of Alameda County, 1935-1994," an oral history conducted in 1994 by Germaine LaBerge, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1994.

LaBerge: Yes. And he couldn't get that off the ground either.

Jurs: Yes. This was on a much smaller scale, but yes, people used to complain about the hospitals, as if they all have to have this expensive equipment which they do not use all the time; they don't seem to feel that they can cooperate and share their resources with it. Unfortunate, it's also greedy. People get--even their groups get what they think they want, and then they choose to not share it with anybody else.

LaBerge: Well, in any case, the Marcus Foster Institute didn't have anything to do with the Prop. 13 cuts?

Jurs: No. Well, it may have--

LaBerge: It may have later, but that wasn't why it started or anything else.

Jurs: No, no. It started just with somebody's good idea, and then I got drawn in early on, because I'd been active in school activities. But no, the schools were beginning to be--well, they always were needy, but not the way they are now. Nobody has money to do anything in the schools these days.

LaBerge: Right. Would it support things like music programs or extra things?

Jurs: Yes. Or especially good new ideas. If a teacher had an idea of what would interest kids, or most anything.

LaBerge: Or anything like field trips, or taking the kids to Lawrence Hall of Science, or things like that?

Jurs: Yes, but they were more innovative than that. I'll try to see if I can think of some.

LaBerge: But it's still going on in the same way?

Jurs: Oh, yes. And it's much more active, and the institute board is big. They've got something like thirty-five on the board. I think it's much too big. This is another prejudice of mine: I think boards can get so big that the director, the executive, can't really connect with each person as much. I just don't think they ought to be bigger than twenty-one. That's big enough. But it is big. And the same people have stayed forever. Almost everybody was on the board at the same time I was.

LaBerge: And still there?

Jurs: Yes, good people, like Jim Vohs, like Bob Blackburn, all these people are still on it and loving it dearly. I think that's an error. I think that they should--as I've probably said a thousand times--enforce the term of office so people have a realistic term limit. This way if the board wants somebody new, they just make another place on the board. The board grows too big. Some people like a big board. I came in early on and I was asked because I was working with the School Volunteers Program. The Marcus Foster Institute continues, in spite of my minor criticisms, to be very active, and Ada Cole is a very able director.

Planning Committee for Lincoln Child Center

Jurs: I used to work almost altogether with issues having to do with children's services or sometimes women's issues or mental health. I became interested in mental health issues. I started in a cooperative nursery school when our number three daughter was there, Christy. I became a member of the board. At that time I was also attending PTA meetings at the public school of our two older daughters. I was asked to be on the nursery school board. I got quite active. Then somebody from the PTA board--or no, from the Montclair PTA--knew me; she was on Lincoln Child Center board and was very active. Molly Belle Rojeski was her name. She suggested me for the board--or a committee, perhaps, at Lincoln Child Center which treats the emotional problems of children.

I got very active there. I was a vice president, and I was the chairman of a two-year planning study for Lincoln, a do-it-yourself planning study. I was the chair, and because I already had become acquainted with many different sorts of people, I asked all kinds of unlikely people to be on this committee. One was the head of the Redevelopment Agency, the head of the local housing agency. It was quite a successful two-year study. We made plans for ten years in the future. Things change too rapidly now and you can't really plan more than a year or two ahead.

Later somebody asked me to serve on the Mental Health Association Board. So I did. I liked that. I was on that board for quite a long time. I think they had three vice presidents, and I served in each capacity. I still occasionally serve on various ad hoc committees.

LaBerge: How did you learn how to do that? I must have read in some article someone who was on that planning study with you, how they learned so much from you about how to manage and how to plan. How did you learn those kinds of skills?

Jurs: I don't know. I had never done that kind of thing before but I guess I've always had the feeling that almost everyone has something to contribute. It doesn't matter whether they have to do with mental health or whether they have to do with children's services but they have something to contribute. They do it because of friendship or they find a new role to be interesting. We had a meeting every month of the long-range planning study with a planning meeting preceding it.

I talked often with the director, Jim Mann. He was an exceptional executive for Lincoln Child Center, very good and very innovative. It is still doing just about what it did twenty-five years ago, I think, which is probably because that was a good thing for it to be doing.

Much later I became associated with the East Bay Agency for Children. I think that it is now a much more innovative service but there is something to be said for continuing to do a good thing over and over and over. There's also much to be said for real creativity.

We thought that the planning study came out well. I did learn a lot as a result and we made many recommendations. I just chaired the committee and helped to pull the work together.

But some things are obvious. If you know in general what direction you want to take, you try to ask people to work with you who can help you in that direction; you make it as easy for them as you can. It means that if you get good people, you don't have so much yourself to do. It's like steering a car. You don't have to know how the insides of the car work but you can drive it.

I thought of that metaphor because my father used to ask my sister and me, "Don't you care how the telephone works?" I remember saying when we were teenagers, "I don't care how it works, I just want to be able to use it." But Gene, he's very much the opposite. He wants to know exactly how the car works; he would take it all apart. He knows how, at least in general, all these things work. If you're not made that way, you're just not made that way.

Superintendents of Oakland Public Schools

LaBerge: A couple more questions on Marcus Foster, unless we've exhausted it: what do you think that he contributed to the schools in Oakland?

Jurs: Oh, I think he contributed an enormous amount. I don't know exactly how to say it. Part of it was his respect for all people, and what their input could be. Whites have often looked down on minorities, blacks and others, and blacks don't always respect what whites say or are suspicious. I think he potentially respected everyone. If somebody had a good idea, he thought it was a good idea. He thought that if I or anybody else came to him--or didn't come to him, if he found us--and we were interested, then we should be used. He was remarkable.

I think perhaps he was not as good at the business end, partly why he had Bob Blackburn and others there. Bob Blackburn now has been for years with the [Alameda] County Department of Education. I don't know much about the business end of the school system but I suspect that that was not his strength. But as far as the human element was concerned, and racial elements were concerned he was remarkable.

Then Ruth Love followed him as superintendent. We had a hard time, we had so many superintendents in a few years. Ruth came. She had originally been a teacher in the Oakland schools. I did not know her but I heard that she was a very good teacher. Then she went to Sacramento to work for education at the state level. I think that she had been very much respected as a teacher but later after several other tries to find someone to follow Marcus Foster, Ruth Love came. Peggy Stinnett, who's a very good friend of mine, was on the board of education in Oakland for something like thirteen or fourteen years. She also wrote for the Montclarion. Now she writes a column for the Tribune. She told me that the board voted unanimously for Ruth Love. She'd followed Marcus Foster, and I had assumed that Ruth, being an education person, would respect volunteers' ideas. I didn't feel that she really did. She wanted to run things in her own way, and she was very intelligent.

LaBerge: What about other superintendents who followed her? Did you have any connections--?

Jurs: I had connections, but they stayed such a short time. We were barely acquainted with every one of them. Stuart Phillips had been in the job for a long time. Superintendents in those days

could stay a long time. People were ready for Phillips to leave. He ran a good, tight system. Of course, they had more money then. It was a different era, and there were not as many problems with kids and community people.

LaBerge: I was just reading one of your daughters' talks at your testimonial, your luncheon for the Central Place, I guess Cynthia. She mentioned that she was at Montera [Junior High School], and she came to you and said she'd like to go to a different school, but she was the fourth of your daughters. Schools had changed a lot since then.

Jurs: We believed devotedly in public schools, but it was a different era.

My daughter Emily and her husband, Fritz, sent both their children to private schools around here. Tabitha went to Head Royce and got a super education. She has now lately graduated summa cum laude from college and is headed for an academic career. Her brother, Ben, graduated from Pomona, having gone to Bishop O'Dowd High School. He also has done very well scholastically and socially.

But I'm sure that if I were your age, I would feel the way you apparently do about public schools and the way my daughters and sons-in-law have, wherever they are living. It's too bad, because it helps to spoil the public school system. It's one reason the public schools have continued to go downhill, I believe. The concept of public schools as schools for all children worked in the beginning. It no longer works. People, who can afford it, move their kids right out of public schools. It seems to me to be unfortunate.

LaBerge: Anything more on Marcus Foster that we haven't covered? Any anecdotes?

Jurs: Oh, I thought Dr. Foster was--as I say, he was a hero. I think a lot of people felt that way. No, I guess I can't think of anything.

LaBerge: Did you ever consider running for school board?

Jurs: No, but I was asked quite a few times to do it. I would never have wanted that. I like to work on a good cause quietly. I like to work on public political campaigns though; I have worked on many political campaigns.

The Alameda County Grand Jury, 1976-1977

LaBerge: Tell me about the grand jury. Who appointed you to that?

Jurs: A judge. Gene had already been appointed to the grand jury a couple of years ahead. He thought it was a wonderful experience. Several of my friends had said that, too. Then I heard that a certain judge, it was his time to appoint people to the grand jury, and welcomed suggestions of people. I told him that I was a candidate. Perhaps I think Gene had done the same. So I got appointed.

Then after that, after my stint, I suggested a number of people for the next group. One of them kidded me because he said I was trying to stack the grand jury. What I was trying to do was this: I knew a lot of minority people and the judges had had a hard time finding minority people with time to serve. I suggested six or eight people that I thought would be fine, would do it and who could make time. I got teased and I decided that suggesting so many was probably a poor idea.

LaBerge: It involves one day a week, or four days a week?

Jurs: You do it whatever you like. I was on three committees so I worked most of three or four days every week. I really worked hard. Gene didn't do quite that much but he was the foreman of his jury. So I worked, I would say, three full days, probably; almost three full days. The grand jury term is for a full year.

I loved it. I liked the people. It was a big mix of people. I was chairman of the education committee. And let's see, what were the others? Two others, but I wasn't the chair of those. How could I forget what they were? It was very interesting. We visited all the county prisons, and saw first-hand what they were like, something I could never have done. It was true that the prisoners were nine-tenths minority people, mostly young men and black mostly. Whites get into trouble too, but they don't seem to end up in jail. That was quite a long time ago but I am sure the same thing is still true.

You get a feel for the way the county government operates. I think jury service is very worthwhile. You ought to do it sometime.

LaBerge: I am interested in it.

Jurs: You should.

LaBerge: Did you have a case?

Jurs: No, not usually. Whoever has an idea brings up what might come before the education committee, or the whatever committee, and then they look into it. Where there seem to be problems, they look into the problems. We for instance had Ruth Love come and talk to us about problems in the Oakland schools, and then made recommendations. You're guided by--what did they call that guy who was with the--what was his job? Anyway, he guided us through. He didn't actually guide us, but if we didn't have an idea, he might get the proper person to talk to us, if we didn't know exactly what to do. Or, citizens can suggest that the grand jury look into problems as well.

So it's a real education. I thought it was remarkably interesting, also very time-consuming. We didn't get paid very much, but we did get paid a little. We went out for lunch each day, and I was shocked to discover that most of the men wanted to go to a bar, and most of the blacks--there were a few black men and women--went to another place, and people like me went to the museum for lunch. I thought that was terrible. So I (and others did this too), I began to say to other groups, "Could I join you today?" I tried hard to be a part of every group. I'm not sure of how effective I was but I did try, and in some cases, succeeded.

LaBerge: Well, that's been one of your hallmarks, it sounds like, in everything that you've done, is try to get people together.

Jurs: I do try, yes. I feel very strongly about it. That's really why I wanted our children to go to public schools. I believe in the reasons for which public schools were founded. I believe in the provisions of the Bill of Rights. I believe firmly. Most people really don't. It's too bad. A liberal friend of mine once said, "You know, I'm really a conservative, and so are you, because we want to protect the Bill of Rights and the Constitution that means going back to the past. It's really the others who are the deviants." So I sometimes think that I should call myself a conservative.

LaBerge: A liberal conservative. How long were you on the grand jury?

Jurs: The term is for one year. People on the jury who had jobs could only work part of a day so they didn't put in as much time. There were some retired men and retired women and others like me who could devote more time to it. I think that I became one of the chairmen since I had more time. I put some of my other activities on, not the back burner, but a side burner, during that year.

Mills College Associates Council

LaBerge: How about the Mills College Associates Council? You were on that for a long time.

Jurs: Yes, and I still am a member. There are only three or four meetings a year unless you are a member of the steering committee so it is not demanding.

LaBerge: How did you get involved in that?

Jurs: Somebody asked me to be on it. It's made up of women who believe in higher education so I was a natural. And also who believe that women's education is important. I didn't want that for me nor did our daughters want it, but I think there is decidedly an important place for a women's college. I think that many girls blossom when they go to a women's college and learn to respect their own ways and talents. I think Mills is a very good college.

I can't think who asked me. I was for several years on the steering committee and we met every month.

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Jurs: Mills College is a strong women's college in this community. When Mary Metz became the president of Mills, I came to know her, probably through that connection. I liked her enormously and was disappointed when she left. She was really kind of forced out. I think that was a great mistake.

LaBerge: Was it on the issue of coeducation?

Jurs: In a sense. The college was having a hard struggle getting money. The number of students had fallen off as well. She had been the product of a small women's college herself and believed in it but she thought that maybe that day had passed. There were quite a lot of men wanting to come enroll at Mills so she thought that it was a practical solution to the problem. I must say, had I been her assistant or had worked with her, I would have agreed. I did agree with her in my heart. I thought that that was a practical solution since the enrollment was falling off.

You know, my friend Ian Zellick, a man, graduated from Mills. He came as a graduate student in stage design, I think. So there have always been a few men on the campus. But there were more and more women wanting to go to coeducational schools. That issue was not why I stopped going to meetings; it was just

that if you have a role to play, then you're more apt to go attend meetings. I loved to go, especially to the spring meeting, which was then held at the president's house. Her husband is an architect. They have beautiful taste. The paintings they took out of the Mills Gallery which were hanging there were so interesting and the garden was attractive. It's a lovely old house.

I liked the people on the steering committee. So I came five or six times a year to those meetings. That made me come to other meetings as well, but I've gotten further and further away from it. I am not as well acquainted with the current college president, Janet Holmgren. I've met her and talked to her, I'm just not as drawn to her as I happen to be to Mary Metz. I thought she was a dynamo. Gene and I thought she was so pretty, too. [laughs] I was charmed by her.

I haven't gone lately to meetings. My daughter Emily is now a member. I suggested her and several of her friends. I suggested they take in men, too. Why should it just be for women who believe in higher education? It's a support group and a way of making some money and getting people interested in Mills. As a community education supporter, it was a natural for me. But I didn't see why it should be a sexual matter.

I also believe that it should be a multi-racial group. I got Abbe Foster and a younger black woman to be members. The young woman belonged to the Junior League. But people don't really want to be token blacks and so they didn't last long as members. All of these women seemed to reject the idea of inviting men to participate. I didn't press the idea and when it didn't work, I dropped the effort.

So it isn't that I've lost interest. Emily goes to the meetings occasionally, and Susan Linney is a member. I thought they needed younger people. I'm afraid that I tend to pack organizations and people tease me about that. It didn't work to try to pack it with a few blacks. I thought others would follow suit, but it didn't work like that. Now, there is one black, I think, and one Chinese woman.

So that organization has played only a small part in my life.

LaBerge: Okay. But it is one more thing that you do, one more meeting.

Jurs: Yes, but one doesn't have to go. They always have a nice luncheon out there at Mills and they have a speaker, and it's quite interesting.

LaBerge: Sort of like belonging to the Friends of the Bancroft Library or something.

Jurs: Yes.

LaBerge: It's a membership kind of thing.

Jurs: Yes.

Friends of Oakland Public Library

LaBerge: What about Oakland Public Library? Is that the same kind of thing, or were you on the board?

Jurs: I was on the board of the Friends of the Oakland Library. I was one of the founding members. Marilyn Snyder founded the group. She had been very active somehow in the library and she'd been a teacher. She thought they needed "a friends of" the organization to contribute money and to contribute books when they have their annual sale, and to do whatever was needed. She asked me and some other people to be on the board and I was moderately active for a while. I was one of the founding members. I still give them books for their book sale but I'm not active any more and of course, I'm not on the board any more.

There again, I suggested several people to be on the board. You know, if you've been around a long time, you know a lot of different sorts of people and then it comes into your head that so-and-so might be interested in this organization. Some people don't have a very wide acquaintance and don't know how to involve other people.

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Volunteer Bureau of Alameda County and Traveler's Aid

LaBerge: I'm going to jump now to the seventies, okay? I have a list of other things that you did that we didn't talk about. And one was the Volunteer Bureau of Alameda County. Tell me about that.

Jurs: Well, I was on the board and it was not one that I threw myself wholeheartedly into. I served on it because I was a volunteer. I liked it and I was a good board member. But it didn't have a,

sort of a mission, but it appealed to me because I thought people should be helping more than they were. In that era, most women were not working, women of my age, and I thought that they should be doing things. So I believed in it. But it wasn't one that, like A Central Place and like Potluck and like the Oakland School Volunteers where I rolled up my sleeves and worked hard. But I liked it. I was for it and I did my job.

LaBerge: What was its purpose? Sort of like a clearing house?

Jurs: Yes, and they helped people find volunteer jobs. They later had a very good program which I think is still extant. People who got tickets or had fines to be paid to the city could work the fine off with volunteer jobs. It was done through the court system. Some of the judges were very enthusiastic and still are. It was a way to get people involved. I haven't stayed in touch with them. I don't know very much about them nowadays. It was just one of the numerous boards on which I served.

LaBerge: Well, for instance, when you started Potluck, would you have called them and said, "If you have any volunteers, send us--"

Jurs: No. By that time I knew how to get involved on my own and how to involve others--what I did with Potluck was very different. I called together, probably I told you this, a group of men and women to discuss with me whether it was feasible, because this was then kind of a new idea, people I had known in lots of different ways. Many of them decided they wanted to volunteer with me. That was the nucleus of the organization. We just met without being a board because we didn't yet have a board. By then I knew how to find volunteers.

Also--and I didn't like this aspect of it very well; I don't like publicity for me very well, but I know that it is a way to interest others--when I started Potluck the fact that I was past seventy years old and starting something new, a senior citizen, starting after my fiftieth wedding anniversary, seemed to be appealing. We wanted publicity badly. You need publicity if you're starting a new organization. Every story wanted to tell the human interest story of this old lady starting Potluck. [laughter] I didn't like that. I got a lot of plaudits and a lot of attention. I just said to myself, well, it isn't for me. It's for Potluck. So that's the way I got around it but I didn't really like that as part of the story.

There were pictures of me and the fact that all this came about after my Golden Wedding Anniversary. They always asked how old I was; they always do anyway, no matter how old you are. I kept saying to people, "What difference does that make? You can

guess how old I am. I don't mind telling you and, after all, if I tell you that it was my fiftieth wedding anniversary, you can pretty well guess how old I am. Why do you have to put that in the story? It seems to me that's very age-ist." But they always said, "But she's in her seventies," which of course was true. That I didn't mind. Your friends all know about how old you are and know how old your children are. But it is a very age-ist to include in every story.

LaBerge: Whether you're supposedly too young or--

Jurs: Yes. They all said to me, "How come you don't retire?" And I still say, "Why should I retire? I'm still energetic." I don't really understand feeling that way. They said, "But you deserve to retire. You've helped to start a lot of things. You deserve it." Retirement would not seem very interesting so I continue to be involved.

I was earlier much interested in the Oakland School Volunteer program. When my children were young there were few volunteers in public schools and it was thought that teaching and education should be wholly a matter for the professionals. Many of us thought that was wrong. It was a time when the Oakland school system was very good. And they had a large department to help children who were having problems.

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LaBerge: Most of these questions I have to ask you are small things. Travelers' Aid.

Jurs: Oh, yes. I was on that board. I liked it.

LaBerge: Tell me what its function is and how you got involved.

Jurs: Once you get known as a volunteer, somebody asks you to help. I have had to turn down more boards than I have worked with. I thought this was a good organization. They had started off helping travelers who ran out of money or others who were stranded one way or another. There were sometimes little girls who had run away from home. The group helps people like that. It seemed, and still does, seem worthwhile. I think they've changed their focus a good deal since and I don't know really what the thrust of the organization now is.

LaBerge: From things that I've read, it sounds like it helps more homeless people.

Jurs: I think it does but there are people, perhaps, who came from the Middle West to get a job and then are stuck in California. I think that's the kind of person they help or perhaps Mexicans who have no money and are here. So I know it has a real function and it's not that I didn't like it. I really never found a role to play. I'm a very conscientious board member.

East Bay Activity Center

LaBerge: East Bay Activity Center, which you've told me about but not on tape.

Jurs: Oh, yes. I love it still. I was on the board of--let's see. How long ago? Ten, twelve years, I think.

LaBerge: It says on your résumé 1977 to 1980.

Jurs: Yes. Around 1980 came the current new director, David La Piana, who's done a lot to breathe new life into it. He's not new now but he's a dynamo and the agency has grown amazingly. It was called East Bay Activity Center. It is now East Bay Agency for Children because activity center didn't by then mean anything. Before I was involved, it was started by Berkeley women, a couple of whom had children with emotional problems or were retarded or had similar problems. The kids couldn't really go to school so they provided activities for these children.

The director was then a half-time psychiatrist. I think that's where it was when I first came on. Its function has now changed. It is still interested in children with emotional problems. It has many branches now.

Basically they're working through the schools, both Hayward and Oakland, to help kids with emotional problems of one kind or another. Sometimes they're deep-seated and sometimes they're short term. It's a terribly good organization. I probably have some literature about it. David La Piana would be wonderful for you to talk to. He has so many ideas and so much energy. He accomplishes so much and he's very likeable besides. So, it's a growing, growing, growing organization.

I had been very active in Lincoln Child Center. I got into that when my children were young. Let's see, how did that happen? Oh, I belonged to the Montclair PTA. A woman named Molly Belle Rojeski was a member of the Montclair PTA, too, and I had become a vice president. Anyway, she asked me to be on the

board of, or, perhaps, to be a member of the function and service committee of Lincoln Child Center. That taught me about the problems of the kids with emotional problems. It's a big need and I was very active there. Lincoln Child Center is really what led me to become interested in EBAC, although they're not related at all.

LaBerge: But it's the same kind of problem.

Jurs: But EBAC is growing much faster. I was very admiring of Jim Mann who was then Lincoln's director. I learned much about board organizations from him. I thought the way Lincoln used volunteers was a model for me. I think that's why I got interested in the Management Center.

LaBerge: Well, let's talk about that.

The Management Center

LaBerge: Did you volunteer there before you got the job or no?

Jurs: Yes, I did, but the way that happened--Gene was then president of the East Bay Community Foundation which was then very small. He was on the board for a very long time. People kept sending material to him. One time he was working at his desk upstairs and I was at my desk and he said, "Here, this is really more up your alley than mine." He laid on my desk a folder from the Management Center. I'd never heard of it.

That organization was founded to help boards run their agencies better, to help both boards and executive directors run their boards better. I thought that was a very good idea because many nonprofit agencies flounder along the way and they don't know--they're all volunteers and they're feeling their way and they're usually very selfless and interested in good causes but they don't always know how to run an organization. Many of them are in need of help.

Bob Orser

Jurs: I was on--what board was I on? Another board that badly needed some kind of help. I didn't know what I was doing but I was doing my best to help get this board on what I thought was a good

track. So I called up Bob Orser, who was the founder and director of the Management Center, as a result of this folder that Gene put on my desk, and said I'd like to talk to him about his work and to find out more about it because I thought I knew a number of boards that could use their help.

So he and I had lunch together. He's still one of my very best friends. I asked him to come to--I can't remember whether it was newly-formed or just kind of a floundering group. I told him some of the problems and asked him to come and help with their problems. He and I conducted a little meeting, a miniature meeting, at the board meeting about what could be done.

Then I told a number of other groups about the Management Center and got a number of other groups to ask for help. The Management Center charges a fee. Clorox had helped to fund a lot of nonprofit organizations and of course they wanted them to run well. So they set aside money for groups that felt they couldn't pay their own way. They're still doing that, especially organizations that they had funded. Clorox has been generous and public-spirited as was Kaiser Aluminum at its height. Clorox was always public-spirited and helpful and they gave much help to struggling good causes.

I got very interested in the Management Center. I pressed groups with which I was working to consult them. Bob said to me one day at lunch, "You know, you ought to be working for us." And I said, "Oh, well, I'm doing enough work now. I'm already half working for you." But we decided that I would work half time and I didn't want to--they go all the way down to San Jose for them. Their services extend south to San Jose and they are most active in San Francisco. I did not want to go that far afield and we agreed that I would work with East Bay agencies only.

I worked only half time and I had already been part of A Central Place which was functioning very well. We rented space for me there. Working at A Central Place gave me a base, an office.

LaBerge: Oh, yes. It seems more professional.

Jurs: They had, and still have, a conference room, a couple of conference rooms, where you could sit and talk to people or have meetings. But I just rented a small space. I had half of a desk and that's all I needed because I was really working out of my home. I did that for three or four years and I liked it. Bob and I still consult. I had lunch with him last week. He's my

very good friend. Of course, the Management Center has grown enormously, too.

LaBerge: Do you want to just talk about a couple groups that you helped or is that too hard to do?

Jurs: I could do it. But they range--gosh, there's just all kinds of different ones. I usually only had two or three sessions with them, you know, sometimes only one.

Board Development

LaBerge: Would you go to some of their board meetings to observe and then make suggestions?

Jurs: It depends. Sometimes they'd ask if I would come to one meeting. And then I would start by saying, "I have your brochure and I understand what your function is and I understand what you think are your strong points. But I'd like you to tell me the areas with which you're having trouble." People tend to describe the things they're proud of. It takes time to reach the problem areas. I learned to say, "Tell me about what you think your weaknesses are or what your lack of strength is, not what your strength is because I understand that, at least to some degree." Then we'd talk about what directions they would like to take.

What I knew most about was boards, board development and board functions. That's what I do best. Very often agencies call the Management Center because there's a conflict between the executive and the board. Very often the board thinks (they may not express it but they think) that the executive should be doing more about raising funds. The executive, at the same time, may be blaming them, thinking they should help more about fundraising. Board members have a real responsibility to help raise funds. What they need to do is define roles of board members and executives. It is, I think, a common complaint. It turns out that the irritation and the problem between board members and the executive is often because there has been no discussion of responsibilities.

I became very interested in board development and I found that people agree to serve on a board and they don't know anything about what their responsibilities should be. Bob and I did, here at my house, a series of training sessions, about every month or two. Whenever there were new board members of a group, we'd have a session to train them in what an ideal board member

does, what their responsibilities are, including serving on a committee. They all should be prepared, should know ahead of time what their responsibilities will be. The organizations should tell them ahead of time when their meetings take place, and how long they last so that if you aren't free on a Tuesday and that's the only time the board meets, then you should say, well I can't do it then. People don't do that. They think they'll drift along and come now and again when they are able. If there are dues, I think that they should be prepared to pay the dues or, if they can't afford them, talk about it and the board should be prepared to let them get by for less. Some dues are high, perhaps especially for performing groups like ballets or symphonies.

LaBerge: You mean if you're on the board of the symphony?

Jurs: If you're on the board.

LaBerge: Do you pay for tickets, do you mean?

Jurs: No, dues are part of your obligation as a board member.

LaBerge: Oh, really. I didn't realize that.

Jurs: Mostly, they asked corporate people who could afford it. And it's expensive to run an opera or a ballet and you can't charge that much for tickets.

LaBerge: See, I've never heard that before. Any boards that I knew about, there was nothing like that. But that makes sense for those kind of things.

Jurs: It does and you should know that when you come on the board. But I don't like to serve on boards like that, anyway. The boards I like are the ones that are maybe just getting started and need ideas and assistance.

But I think it's fair enough to set high dues if you need to and I also think that some people should be excused from paying. It's very good if you can say, "One hundred percent of our board cares enough about us that they contribute, a hundred percent of them." We also always talked about various kinds of racial or sexual integration, to try to be sure to have a mix of people.

Obligations of a Good Board Member

Jurs: I usually asked when I had been asked to be on a board, "Why me? What do you hope that I can do?" Then I would know what role they saw for me. "Well, we would hope that you would be able to help with"--whatever it is. To corporate people, perhaps you could say, "We need more corporate members and we thought that maybe you could help us run our organization better or help us with fundraising." Or, "We're very anxious to have more minority representation on the board and we thought that maybe you could help us with that kind of thing." I think it's better to lay on the line what the needs are and what might be expected from an oncoming board member.

For the Management Center board candidate project at my house, we'd have a two-hour session. We had fun. We'd serve them coffee or cookies or something but then it was a business meeting. Eight or ten people would be invited and we'd talk about what we thought the needs of the board were and discuss that a little bit and train them in what we thought were their obligations if they decided to serve on a board. Certainly their obligation is, first, to come to the meetings or else to get off the board.

A lot of people like to be on boards just to have their names on the list. They like the publicity. I think that's a poor reason to be on a board and they should understand that that's a poor way. I've always thought, however, that listing the names of helpers is very good. Potluck, for instance, and all the ones I've worked with, has a listing down the side of the stationery of advisers as well as a list of board members.

Potluck tells an advisory group that there will be no meetings, that we would like to feel free to telephone if there was some area where they could help us. For instance, if you get a caterer on the advisory list you could call the caterer and say, "Can you help with this and so?" One time George Vukasin, who has a coffee business as well as many civic connections, helped us to get leftover food from the Coliseum.

LaBerge: Oh, that's right.

Jurs: If you have people like that who don't come to meetings but are interested enough to say, "Oh, sure, I'll call so-and-so for you," it's often extremely helpful. If you need to lobby for something, it's certainly helpful to have Nick Petris as an advisor. The advisors won't be called up for a couple of years but I think it's useful to know that you can get in touch.

But I think that people should not serve on executive boards unless they mean to be really a board member and not just a name. Many people say, "Oh, sure. I'll do it. You know, I can't come very often to meetings but I'd be glad to serve on the board." Well, I think that's not good for the person, who then doesn't know what's going on, and it's not good for the board either.

LaBerge: Those are the sorts of things that you did.

Jurs: Yes. I liked the Board Candidate Project. We found volunteers and then trained them to serve on a board.

LaBerge: Found volunteers for certain boards?

Jurs: Yes, and then trained them. I think that was worthwhile. The Management Center wasn't able to continue that project because it did take money and they couldn't fund it very well. A local corporation, for a time, paid the salary of the part-time person at the Management Center who ran the Board Candidate Project because it was interested in encouraging middle management employees to serve on community boards of directors.

Barbara Schilling and Charlene Harvey

LaBerge: How many people work for the Management Center?

Jurs: I don't know now. Perhaps twelve or fifteen. Bob Orser had earlier founded another organization, The Support Center, which is still operating in San Francisco. It was working along similar lines. Barbara Schilling worked closely there with Bob, and they later had some differences with the rest of the board. They split off and together founded the Management Center. That was before I became connected with the Management Center and I don't know any of the details. Barbara died of lung cancer just a couple of years ago. I admired her enormously. She was very professional and between Bob and Barbara, it seemed to me the Management Center was very well run. Charlene Harvey worked there, too. Her husband was president of Transamerica. She quit rather lately. Her husband hadn't been well. She's lately been president of the KQED board.

LaBerge: That's right. I knew I had heard that name.

Jurs: That's who she is. She was very good, too. I think she had belonged to the Junior League, had gotten interested in volunteerism and worked with Barbara in connection with some good

cause. She was very interested in the work of the Management Center and she came to Barbara and said, "Teach me how to do this. Can I work with you?" And so she became a member of the Management Center team. Now both of them are--Barbara's gone and Charlene is not doing it anymore. But Bob is still there and has hired a lot of other people. I don't know the other people nearly as well.

I enjoyed it and I learned a lot. I learned what kind of questions people tend to ask. I already knew what I thought made a good board member and a good board but I hadn't--you know, you don't put things in order unless you're teaching somebody else.

LaBerge: You need to put it in a context.

Jurs: Yes. I already had strong ideas about board management. I learned a great deal from membership on the Lincoln Child Center. I had a kind of a model so when I saw other boards, I frequently thought that others really don't know how to do it well. I began to think along those lines.

X SUMMING UP

Mixing Different People

Jurs: What I really like is putting people together with other people who are like-minded. I really like that aspect of it in everything I do. I like networking, which is very important for boards. The more networking you can do, the easier it is to find volunteers and the easier it is, if you're starting something, to know how to ask or to get some advice. That's how I got acquainted with Ian Zellick. He was, I'm sure I've said, program director of KTVU-TV. He has now retired. One aspect of his job was to serve on a lot of boards of the community. He and I turned up on many boards together. Or he suggested me for certain jobs. He's still doing this, somebody says, "Do you know anybody who--?" And he says, "Well, why not ask Florence."

LaBerge: Talk to Florence.

Jurs: And I often say, "Have you ever talked to Ian Zellick? You know, he used to be on the board of such and such." He was one of the first I went to when I was getting Potluck started. He and his wife have become very good friends.

LaBerge: Well, you know one of the first things you said to me, I mean the first time I ever called you a couple of years ago, was that I needed to talk to a lot of people.

##

Jurs: --people who grow up in a community and never move outside the parameters of all of that. I like to know all sorts of different people. For instance, when I was working with Potluck, which of course was rather lately, a black woman said to me, "I don't see how you happen to be interested in this because I'm sure you've never been hungry in your life." I said, "Have you been hungry?"

Yes, she had been hungry. Black groups tended to usually, through their churches, start feeding hungry people. I think they've always done it.

Community Discussion Meetings, 1975-1977

[In 1975, my friend Joan Hughes, fellow community volunteer (and wife of Robert Hughes, an attorney, once a candidate for the California Assembly and later a bankruptcy judge in Oakland) asked me if I would like to join with her in hosting a series of lunchtime discussion sessions. She and I had both long been active in volunteer organizations, often connected with children's services or with education. (She had six children and I, of course, had four). I liked the idea and we developed what proved to be a good format. We decided to host monthly lunchtime gatherings for twelve people each time. I would invite five and she would invite five more; one month the luncheon would take place at her house and the next month at mine. When it took place at her house I was a guest, except for the fact that I too had invited five guests, and the next month she was a guest at my house, having invited five more guests. We chose a format, different each time, and ahead of time conferred about the guest list. (See list of topics and of guests later.)

Our guests were active in their fields as volunteers or as professionals and they were all very community-minded. We asked them to come at noon and we told each of them that we could get them out by one o'clock if they needed to go, but we hoped that they would be able to stay longer. We served a glass of wine to each, if they wanted it, and we served lunch immediately. It was all very informal and we had no formal agenda but they all knew the subject matter, were involved in that field. Most of them were able to remain longer. They all seemed to want to be there and the discussions were lively and animated. They often exchanged cards and telephone numbers and we both felt that the experiment was a great success in terms of information-sharing and networking--and it was fun besides. Except for gaps when one or both of us was away, it went on for about three years until Joan's health problems intervened. We always thought--at least I did--that we would start it up again, but we never did.

Meetings in 1975, 1976, 1977

Luncheon focus:

- Conservation
- The Political Process
- Mental health, psychology
- Art and the protection of the artist
- Education
- The status of women
- The grand jury process
- Public housing
- Women in elected offices
- China (when the first tourists were beginning to visit)
- Mental health
- China (#2)
- The Grand Jury (#2)]¹

Changes in Volunteerism

LaBerge: Well, I'd like to do some wrap-up questions or things that you think that we haven't touched on. Do you see changes in your era, either in volunteers or needs that haven't been addressed? What do you see in the future from your experience?

Jurs: Many groups say that they have trouble getting volunteers. I hear this all the time. But I think it depends on what kind of a volunteer job it is. We certainly had no difficulty when we were starting Potluck. Most of our volunteers came to us and offered their help.

There used to be a core of women like me who didn't work and that's no longer true. You may have to have your meetings at 7:30 in the morning or at night or at five o'clock in order to accommodate volunteers with other jobs. But I think that's a small price to pay and why not? Many people are still eager and perfectly willing to do volunteer jobs but it's a different kind of volunteer, I think. It used to be that when women with a lot of leisure time were asked to serve on a board, they'd say, "Oh, well. I might as well do that."

LaBerge: And sort of to use up the time.

¹This material was added by Mrs. Jurs during the editing process.

Jurs: Instead of helping a good cause.

LaBerge: There's more motivation.

Jurs: More motivation. Organizations need publicity and they need human interest stories. Potluck is well run and it operates more like a corporation these days.

LaBerge: The bigger it gets.

Jurs: And it's a more complex operation. It, for me, would not be as much fun. The current president is a businessman and it is run more like a business.

LaBerge: What's his name?

Jurs: Doug Higgins. He is looking into every aspect of the organization with an eye toward helping it to be more efficient. Organizations differ greatly and the kind of board members they need differ greatly, some agencies draw heavily on the help of corporate people. Some corporations now are very willing these days to let their middle management people attend board meetings or to spend time working with the board. And that didn't, I think, used to be as true as it is now. Many companies encourage that participation.

There are many more blacks and some Hispanics who are willing and anxious to serve on a board. Of course, now, there are so many more middle management and upper management people who are minorities. So yes, the picture has changed and certainly for the better.

Changes in Oakland Politics and Schools

LaBerge: Well, that kind of leads us into Oakland in general. I mean, you worked very hard to try to mix things up in Oakland and in Oakland politics. How do you think it's changed and how do you think it's going to go?

Jurs: I lately was disappointed because I worked in the campaign of Mary King [for mayor of Oakland]. She's on the board of supervisors currently. I thought she had a good chance to be elected. Ted Dang came into the picture and Mary lost votes as a result. I was disappointed about Mary King because, I think, she had, has real potential. She thought she was going to do better, too. She thought there would at least be a run-off, I think,

between her and the mayor [Elihu Harris]. Ted Dang got in the way of that.

LaBerge: But you've seen Oakland even--you were in Oakland before we ever had a black mayor and now we're--

Jurs: But Oakland elected minority people very early. There have been, on the board, both on the board of education and the city council for years. [Lionel] Wilson was black and he was first a judge and then mayor for quite a long time. [Frank] Ogawa was Japanese and was for years and years on the city council, was respected and liked. He was a gentle fellow who had a lot of friends. I think that Oakland was able to do this before most other cities the size of Oakland did.

I remember I worked very hard for Electra Price--maybe I've talked about this--but she ran twice for the board of education. She was and is a wonderful black woman. I precinct-walked and did everything I could to help her. I admired her a lot. I met her through the League of Women Voters. At that time she was probably the only black who belonged to the League of Women Voters.

It seems to be more politically correct now to say African American rather than black. In fact, one friend of mine who is black said, "Originally, I was a nigger. Then I became a Negro. Then I became a colored person. Then I became a black. And now I'm an African American."

So Electra, to my mind, should have gotten on the board of education but she was a woman, for one thing, and for another she was an African American. There was a black man already on the board of education who was on the board for years. It was too early for a black woman to be elected. Electra later took a job with the Oakland school system. I was disappointed about her failure to win. I like to think that that picture is changing.

Yes, there have been a lot of changes. Perhaps few people would agree with this observation but I liked it better when each city councilman represented the whole city instead of only his part of the city and each member of the board of education represented the whole city, too. It seems to me that it makes for a less parochial society and a less competitive system. Our elected officials, at every level, have very narrow viewpoints. Few congressmen, for instance, think of the good of the whole country. They seem, instead, only to think of their own state, their own political party, their own interests.

LaBerge: How about the schools? Do you think there's hope for the schools?

Jurs: Well, I think charter schools are going to be a very good thing. I like to see that movement. I don't know whether there's hope or not; the Oakland schools are in such disarray. But there are pockets of good education still. But they're small pockets, I think. And increasingly--well, my daughters have told me that probably if they were children today I would want to send them to a private school.

I felt fiercely then that I wanted them to be part of the real world. I just don't like privilege. But of course, schools are very dangerous now. Karen and Emily went to Oakland High and now there are students who are afraid to go to the bathroom at places like Oakland High. And there's so much violence I probably would feel differently than I did in the past. I think I've mentioned that when Karen and Emily, the first two, were growing up, because we were close to the Piedmont line, they could have gone to Piedmont High School, if there was room. That was before schools were so crowded. I didn't want that. There were too many people in Piedmont, and Oakland too, it seemed to me, who thought their children only met "nice" children in the Piedmont schools. [interruption]

The Younger Generation

LaBerge: Well, if you were giving advice to one of your grandchildren, kind of to sum up from either your experience in life, do you have any specific things you would say?

Jurs: No, I don't believe in giving people a lot of advice. [laughter] I'm very happy about the way our children and grandchildren have developed. One lovely thing about being as old as I is that you get to see, not only how your own children are turning out, have turned out, but also how your grandchildren have turned out. At least you see the direction they are taking. We're fortunate because all six of our grandchildren seem to have things they're really deeply interested in. They're bright so, you see, we've been very lucky.

My experience is so different from theirs that I don't like to give them advice. Tabitha is Emily's daughter--she's got a five-year scholarship. She wants to be a professor of English literature and history. She graduated with highest honors and is a Phi Beta Kappa. She's a bookish girl and I was, too. She



Florence Jurs's eightieth birthday party, 1992. Front row: Cynthia Jurs, Christy Papadakis, Emily Sparks, Karen Kalkstein, Shawn Kalkstein. Middle row: George Papadakis, Kendall Kalkstein, Lara Papadakis, Jed Kalkstein, Tabitha Sparks, Florence Jurs, Eugene Jurs. Back row: Hugh Wheir, Ben Sparks, Nathaniel Papadakis, Fritz Sparks.

lived in Oakland. I would talk with her about books and I might suggest things for her to read. It was fun for one to talk to her. In ways like that you can help.

Lara, another granddaughter, stayed with us for six weeks. She wants to be a surgeon and she asked me to help her.

LaBerge: One summer.

Jurs: Yes, a year ago. The stay was a great success because she met a lot of doctors and watched a lot of operations. This summer she went to Greece. She's half Greek and she speaks a little Greek. We got an enthusiastic letter the other day about how her stay was such an adventure and so wonderful. She loves the Greek people. Of course, she's half Greek. So I like to talk to grandchildren about things like that but I don't believe in giving them advice. I don't believe in giving daughters advice either, unless they ask me. And mostly they don't. I certainly don't believe in giving sons-in-law advice. But I like to talk with them.

Last Thoughts

LaBerge: Well, anything in your life you'd do differently?

Jurs: Probably, yes, there are some things. I've always wanted to paint and I just somehow never really did. I took lessons two or three times. I should have tried harder. I'm a color enthusiast. My taste was always ahead of my ability. I got discouraged, always. Of course, it's never too late and I keep thinking, well maybe I'll try it again. One thing that came out of my interest is that our daughters are all interested in color and design. I talked to them about paintings. I pinned pictures on the wall. That's the way my mind works and I should have stayed with painting.

I think I should have taken a job. Several times I was asked to consider making an application. But we really didn't need the money and I did have four children. I think if I were your age, I would have some kind of a job.

LaBerge: Which ones are you sorry you turned down?

Jurs: Oh, I'm not sorry about any of them. I told somebody who interviewed me (I guess that was the Montclarion) that I was a frustrated career woman. It wasn't that I couldn't have done it

but I liked very much the things I did and I'd get very fascinated, very interested and all wrapped up in what I worked on. In a way, I wouldn't change it but it might have been better to focus on one thing. There is something, too, about getting paid, which I mostly am not.

LaBerge: There's some self-worth thing about it.

Jurs: Yes, there is. The Management Center was the only agency that ever paid me. I think I could have done it. It was partly the times and partly the fact that we didn't need the money. Also it is hard if you've got children in school. So no, I really wouldn't change it. I'd change me but I wouldn't change my life. I'd change me quite a lot.

LaBerge: Well, not many people in Oakland would agree with that.

Jurs: Oh, yes they would. I have firm ideas and some prejudices too. Some people think I'm too liberal. People like me are really the conservatives because I, for instance, would like to protect the Bill of Rights and the Constitution and the things that our founding fathers believed. People now think they're protecting those beliefs but they're not protecting them at all. They don't really understand. I think that's too bad. I really think we have two real dangers: the far right and the far left. I think they're both very dangerous. I mean, look at some of the people who are running for Congress these days. It's scary. I'm so glad I don't have to live in Virginia!

LaBerge: Oh, that's for sure.

Jurs: What would you do? Bob Orser's mother lives in Virginia and he said she's up a terrible tree. She doesn't like any of the candidates, doesn't like not to vote. I think the far right is almost more of a danger than the far left these days but I don't like the far left either. A liberal middle ground is what I like. I call it conservative because it is harking back to what our founding fathers believed.

But I would, yes, I would change me a lot. I'd make myself be more patient. But I wouldn't change where I live. And I wouldn't change my children either, except in very minor ways.
[laughter]

LaBerge: We can strike that out. [laughter]

Jurs: I wouldn't change them really at all. They've all grown up to be real individuals. They don't always agree with me but that's the way it ought to be.

LaBerge: Well, shall we end there?

Jurs: Yes.

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Oakland Potluck Food Server Associates

MARCH 95

FOOD SERVERS

CAL PEP (CA People's Ed)

630-20th Street
Oakland 94607

Contact: Gloria or Terri
or Charles Richardson, Coord.
874-7850 or 874-7843

FREQUENCY & # OF MEALS

42 people for lunch and dinner
weekdays.

Feed people who come for health
education classes. Sometimes
need food for large educational
programs.

Can sometimes pick up. Not
reliable.

CENTER FOR AIDS SERVICES

5720 Shattuck Avenue @ 57th
Oakland, 94609

Contact: Mary
655-3435

Feed 75 people breakfast 9:30-11
and 100 people lunch 12-1:15
weekdays. Lunches catered by
local restaurants. Can sometimes
pick up.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

CHILDREN'S FOOD BASKET

1st Covenant Church,
4000 Redwood Road,
Oakland, 94619

Contact: Carolyn Piraino
339-3120 (son's name is
Michael)

Mail: 7250 Sayre Ave., Oakland,
94611

Brown bag program for 600 school
age children **Friday**
afternoon. Can pick up.

Can usually reach Carolyn
between 11 a.m. and noon on
Fridays before she goes to
distribute food.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

CHINESE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

168-11th St. btw Jackson &
Madison
Oakland 94607

Contact: Rosemarie Fan
839-2022

Feed 120 seniors **Monday-**
Friday.

Serve only Chinese food. Can use
fruit, bagels, scones. No dairy
products or perishables.
Holding and serving kitchen,
only.

EAST BAY FULL GOSPEL MISSION

543 - 8th St. @ Clay
Oakland 94607

Contact: Mike or Rick
451-0377, Harry 451-0375

A drop-in center serving donuts and coffee to 160 people **a day**. Do not need food beyond regular assignments.

WILL BE CLOSING MISSION IN JUNE

EAST OAKLAND RECOVERY CENTER

7229 E. 14th St.
Oakland 94603

Contact (in this order): Carl Crossley, Abe Norsworthy, Eva O'Brien
568-2432

Serve snacks to fifty people **every day**.
Can pick up.

NO COOKING FACILITIES EXCEPT MICROWAVE - CAN USE STOVE/OVEN UPSTAIRS AT TIMES.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

ELMHURST SDA CHURCH

9658 Thermal Ave. Oak 94605

Contact: Hattie Allen
568-8453 after 3:30 p.m. or all day Friday. Or leave message w/ Hazel 632-2335.

Feed 200-250 at Jefferson Park on **Sundays**. They can use most foods. Can sometimes pick up. Reliable. No pork.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

793 W. Grand Ave. @ West St.
Oakland 94612

Contact: MARY WILSON
834-8352 - 635-5075

Feed 150 people lunch on **Monday**.
Can pick up. Reliable.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

GOOD SAMARITAN

1615-10th Ave. @ Foothill
Oakland 94606

Contact: Cleveland Thomas
536-9750 (w) **before 10 am**.
632-4788 (h) Messages.

Feed 25 people lunch on **Mon. & Thurs**. Give away 150-200 bags of food at 9 a.m. on **Friday**. Reliable about picking up.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

HEALTHY BABIES

3127 Telegraph Ave. Oak. 94609
 Contact: Majeedah, 596-4189

Barbara, ~~596-4136~~

FAX #652-4564

Feeds 35 people **every day**
including weekends .
 Can pick up.

Lunch - Monday-Thursday:

John George Family Recovery Ctr.
 3229 Elm St., Oak. 94609

Brown Bag Program:

Fanny Lou Hamer Center at
 Project Acorn
 917-B Market St., Oak. 95607

Shelters:

3127 Telegraph Ave.
 1002-4 36th St., Oak 94608

HOMEPLACE FAMILY CENTER

807-27th St., @ San Pablo
 Oakland, CA 94612

Contact: Liza Hauswald-David
 Jackson
 893-1220

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

Feed 40 parents and children
Monday through Friday ~~Do not~~
~~pick up.~~

INTERTRIBAL FRIENDSHIP HOUSE

523 E. 14th St. @ 5th Ave.
 Oak 94606

Contact: Sarah, Pat, Maggie
 452-1235

Lunch **weekdays** to 20-30.
 Dinner on **Wednesdays** for 30-
 50. Youth group meets every
Friday eve.
 Can pick up.

LOVE IN ACTION. distributes
 food at Ephesian Church,
 1709 Alcatraz, Berkeley.

1809 Oregon St. btw. MLK & Grant
 Berkeley 94703

Contact: Minnie Dawson
 843-1472

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

Brown bag food. Give food to
 100-180 on **Thurs.** Give prepared
 food to families. Reliable
 pickup.

MCGEE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH

1640 Stuart St.
Berkeley, CA 94703

Contact: Joe Lucas, Chester
Harris or Mr. McFadden
540-9413-Kitchen M-W-F
Joe Lucas 233-0232 (h)
Church office Tu-Th - 843-1774
McFadden home: 644-3965

Feed lunch to 200 **Mon., Weds., Friday.** Can pick up including **Saturdays and Sundays**
Do not need bread or breakfast foods. Very Reliable.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

MT ZION PRAYER TOWER MISSION

9615 E. 14th St.
Oakland 94603
(H) 1322 Russell St., Berk 94702

Feed 35-50 people **Monday eve. and Sunday noon.**
Reliable pick ups.

Contact: Pastor Pinkie Sexton or
Harold Sexton
486-0410(h) or 632-9161(church)

OAKLAND CATHOLIC WORKER

4848 E. 14th St. @ 50th
Oakland 94601

Contact: Mark McKinney or Linda
Short
533-7375

Serves 10-15 Central American
refugees **7 days a week.** Do not
pick up. Very choosy about what
food they will take.
Primarily Hispanic

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

OAKLAND HOMELESS PROJECT

1820 Jefferson St. @ San Pablo
Oakland 94612

Contact: Michael or Mr. Davis
465-0881

Feed 100 people breakfast, lunch
and dinner and snacks **7 days a week.** Do not pick up.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

PENIEL MISSION

722 Washington St. @ 7th St.,
Oak 94607

Contact: Bob Margawon, 452-3758
or Prg. Dir. Tim Keeney, or Judy
McNeal

Feed 40 breakfast and 75 dinner
Mon. Tu, Thur. Fri. Give
snacks to 5-20 children **5 days**
a week. Feed 55-65 street people
6 days a week. Can pick up
sometimes.

SHELTER

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

PHASE III, INC.

1014-21st Street (weekdays)
2576 San Pablo Ave. (weekends)
Oakland, CA 94607

Contact: Rev. Agee
763-5713 Weekdays - 444-7331
Tony or Jory

Feed 45 people 3 meals a day
every day. They can use any
kind of food. ~~Can not pick up.~~

PILGRIM REST BAPTIST CHURCH

659 - 16th St. @ MLK Jr. Way
Oak 94612

Feed 35-50 people **Mon., Tues.,**
Thur., Fri. Unable to pick up

Contact: Mother Salter
893-9245 (church)
839-0785 (home)

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

PROGRESSIVE SENIOR CITIZENS

3310 Peralta St.
Oakland 94607

Brown Bag food **when available.**
They do not pick up.

Contact: Carolyn Edwards
654-7427

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

PROJECT HELP

2901 Morcom Avenue
Oakland, 94619

Contact: Frances Collins
534 5634, 534-0455

Feed 200-250 every **Wednesday** in Jefferson Park. Give away food to 30+ families. Pick up. Very reliable.

RECEIVES BREAD FROM LUCKY TWO TIMES A WEEK

PROJECT OPEN HAND

5720 Shattuck Ave.
Oakland 94609

Contact: John Gilligan
596-8205

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

400 bags of food given away **M-T-Th-F**. Has Van available - rarely picks up
Same site as Center for Aids.

CLIENTS PICK UP FOOD BAGS DURING DAYS SERVED BETWEEN 10-3

PROJECT SAFETY NET

1st Baptist church
22nd & Telegraph
Oakland 94612
444-7811

Contact: Marie Pierce **835-1329**
John Seely 451-5111
Roy Levine 652-7551

Vera Wrather 654-5858

Sara Wilkerson 654-2976

Emily Reed 444-2672 or 549-2625

Lela Young 832-4326 M, Tu, W, F

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

Coalition of churches feeding 100 people **Tues-Friday**. Brown Bag program **Thurs**. Can pick up. Can use all kinds of food.

DO NOT WANT BAGELS

Tues. Beth Eden Baptist Church
10th & Adeline

Wed. Downs Memorial Church
61st & Idaho

Thurs. Evergreen Baptist Church
Webster & MacArthur

Fri. Greater Cooper AME Church
14th & Myrtle St.

Thurs. Brown Bag Program
Bethlehem Lutheran Church
959-12th @ Market

**ST. ANDREW/ST. JOSEPH
Catholic Church**

925 Brockhurst At. @ San Pablo
between 33rd & S. Pablo
Oakland 94608

Feed 300 **Mon. - Fri.** Can
pick up evenings and weekends,
only.

Contact: Shirley Weber, Robin
Ernest
658-6622 (h) 654-3985

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

ST. ELIZABETH'S PARISH

1500 34th Ave @ Farman
Oakland 94601

Brown bag program for 15 to 35
families **Tues. and Fri.** Mainly
non-perishables and infant
formula and dry milk.

Contact: Sister Nina or Fr.
Ignatius
536-1266
Driver: Al Volz 658-1504

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

TELEGRAPH COMMUNITY CENTER

5316 Telegraph Ave. @ 52nd St.
Oakland 94609

Contact: Paula or Ted Dickson
658-4457

Feed 35-55 **Tuesday dinner.**
(mentally retarded) Emergency
food to 40 families **MWF.** Lunch
to 12 MWF. Closed Tues a.m. and
all day Thursday. Very
reliable pickups.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

WOMEN'S REFUGE

P.O. Box 3298
Berkeley 94703
6525 Shattuck Avenue, Berkeley

Contact: Laura Brown
**658-7231 - MARGARETHA DOES
PICK UPS**

SHELTER for abused women and
their children. Feed 20-30 people
3 meals a day. Able to make some
pick ups.

**Be careful about giving out
this address; give only to
people delivering food.**

WRIGHT, MARY ANN FOUNDATION
1120-26th Street.
Oak 94607
Contact: Mother Wright or Carol
763-3111

Feed 150-200 in Jefferson Park
on **Saturday**. Can sometimes pick
up. Very unreliable.

REGISTERED AGENCY AT ACCFB

Luncheon for Florence Turs
April 23, 1980 - Goodman's

My name is Bob Blackburn. I will be doing no introductions today. For our purposes there is only one dignitary here - and she's right over there.

In organizing this modest occasion to say thank you to Florence, the planners, led particularly by Susan Duncan and Joan Hughes, foresaw two possibilities. The first was the Cecil B. De Mille Version. Highlights were to include the following. Lunch was to be alphabet soup. A prize was to be given to the table that was collectively able to pluck out - and spell out - the names of the most organizations started by, led by or given direction by Florence. Music was to be from a chorus of 1000 citizens who serve on the boards of these groups, supplemented modestly by the Mormon Tabernacle and Vienna Boys' choirs. In the midst of their closing number, the Anvil Chorus, a human diorama was to rise up out of the floor, featuring that magnificent figure of a man, Gene Turs, stripped to the waist, pounding away like a blacksmith, celebrating Florence's work, beating the sword of public apathy and civic indifference into the plowshare of involvement, commitment and effective action.

Then, entering and circling the room was a tiny train, laden with people and programs, activities and issues - all representing services for the young and old, school kids, the handicapped, organizations, women and men, all the products of Florence's success in improving the quality of life in Oakland. And there at the front, the

brave little engine, its name proudly glistening, the "East Bay F.J. — Unlimited:" The Little Engine That Could. And the music — "dun dun (bad vocalizing from the Anvil Chorus)... " and the engine — "I think I can, I think I can . . . " Then, midst the pounding and the tumult, through the hall sweeps Florence, looking very much like the Tooth Fairy, out the door, into the sun, where she is borne away by throngs of happy children — off on a joyous march to Lake Merritt. Overhead, thousands of doves wheel and rise up, each representing an idea given wing by Florence. The city RINGS with the pealings of hundreds of church bells, each GONG representing a 'phone call from Florence summoning us to some new duty or other.

At the shore's edge, we find Cornell Maier and the Lake Merritt boat ladies in one of their notorious sasparilla soirées, but they give way quickly to the happy multitudes. There, the Queen of Volunteers steps daintily out and proceeds to walk across the water. The crowd cheers her radiant performance! (Lionel Wilson is seen from the sidelines, his glasses focussed on her feet.) Suddenly a gray shape breaks the water, mouth agape, teeth glistening. Taws II! (Played, of course, by the amiable Moose Dunston.) On the shore, we gasp. The sky momentarily darkens, there's a clap of thunder as Florence touches the shark with her scepter: "It isn't nice to fool with Mother Nature." The shark is transformed into a beautiful swan, and it glides away, bearing Florence on a silver throne, leaving the water indeed all of Oakland, shimmering with the irredesence of her magic.

(Audible sigh) Well, so much for Plan A. We actually had one full dress rehearsal, but it all fell apart because of Shirley Roberson. Oh, she said, she didn't mind getting down on her hands and knees, holding her breath and crawling along under the lake with Florence on her back. It wasn't that. No, she said it was the stuff in the water from those people in Piedmont.

Well, as for Plan B, it was somewhat different. We would gather for lunch alright, but nobody would say anything. We would all silently meditate, thinking in wonderment about all that Florence has accomplished for each of us, and for our community. The vibrations of energy, radiating out of this profound meditation, would rise up and be captured in giant storage units - the 'Juvenating Ultra Renewal System' (JURS, for short). And then later, when we felt we couldn't get one more set of minutes done, or go to a single other meeting, or make those calls, or testify at that hearing, or find the money in that budget that kids need, we'd go down to A Central Place, go to the JURs, grab the two electrodes (demonstrate with vibrating hands) and be re-energized for effective action.

As it was, we finally compromised to Plan C, which is this, just here together, demonstrating by our presence our admiration and affection for Florence. A few friends will now step forth, representing with a few fond comments a small sampling of all that Florence has been up to these busy years. Most of you have seen the spate of articles about Florence - the Montclarion, the

Trib, and a special piece in A Central Place's newsletter, with a photograph I particularly liked, showing Florence looking for all the world like the beloved Margaret Mead, had Dr. Mead had Florence's slender grace. And here's the author of that piece, a redoubtable activist and catalytic agent in her own right, Peggy Stinnett.

(There followed introductions of the other speakers, and other stray, unrecorded observations. Then a closing comment, below.)

Gene and I, and every other man in the room, know that behind every good woman is a committee of very effective women. And in this National Volunteers Week, all of us should pause to take pride and pleasure in the opportunities we have in Oakland: to meet our own needs, to enlarge the meaning and purpose of our lives through service to others, and to enhance our community. This pride and pleasure finds no fuller expression than in our feelings for Florence.

It is of thee we sing, Florence: keystone, source, advocate, advisor, initiator, instigator, healer, friend and teacher. At once bold and shy, tactful and tenacious. I give you our cherished honoree, Florence Turs.

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GERMAINE LaBERGE

B.A. in European History, 1970, Manhattanville College
Purchase, New York

M.A. in Education, 1971, Marygrove College
Detroit, Michigan

Law Office Study, 1974-1978

Member, State Bar of California since 1979 (inactive status)

Elementary School Teacher in Michigan and California

Experience in legal research and writing, drafting legal documents

Volunteer in drug education and hunger programs,
Oakland and Berkeley, California

Interviewer/Editor in the Regional Oral History Office in fields
of business, law and University history, 1987 to present.

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